The WORKS of Mr. HENRY SCOUGAL

Professor of Divinity

In the KING'S COLLEGE ABERDEEN.

CONTAINING

The LIFE of GOD in the SOUL of MAN;

Or the Nature and Excellency of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

With nine other DISCOURSES On IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

ALSO

A brief Account of the AUTHOR'S Life, and a SERMON preached at his Funeral by GEORGE GAIRDEN D. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Perfectionis ac felicitatis summum est uniri Deo.

ABERDEEN:

Printed by FRANCIS DOUGLAS, and sold at his Shop in the End of the Broadgate.

MDCCLIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE PREFACE.

MR. *HENRY SCOUGAL*, the worthy author of the following book, was born about the end of *June*, in the year 1650.

His Father, Mr. *Patrick Scougal*, was ſometime Miniſter at *Salton*, and afterward Biſhop of *Aberdeen*; in which See he ſat above twenty years from the Reſtoration. He was married to *Margaret Wemyſs*, daughter to a Gentleman in *Fife*; by whom he had three ſons and two daughters. *John Scougal*, the eldeſt ſon, became Commiſſary of *Aberdeen*. Our author was the ſecond. The youngeſt ſon, *James*, upon his eldeſt brother's death, ſucceeded him in the Commiſſariot; which poſt he ſold to Mr. *Robert Paterſon*, father to the late Commiſſary of *Aberdeen*. He then went to *Edinburgh*; where he was made one of the Senators of the College of Juſtice, by the title of Lord *Whitelill*. *Katherine Scougal*, the elder daughter, married *Alexander Scrogie* Biſhop of *Argyle*; and *Jean* the younger, became ſpouſe to Mr. *Patrick Sibbald*, one of the Miniſters of *Aberdeen*.

But to return to our author. From his childhood he made uncommon progreſs in divine as well as human learning. At the age of fifteen he went to the univerſity; where he finiſhed his courſes in four years time. And ſcarce had he ceaſed to be a pupil, when he became a Profeſſor. Having adorned this character four years, the more immediate ſervice of God in his church required him to enter into holy orders; and he was ſoon after ſettled

at *Auchterleſs*, a ſmall village about twenty miles from *Aberdeen*. Here he had preached the goſpel but the ſpace of one year when he was recalled to *Aberdeen*, and promoted to the Profeſſorſhip of Divinity in the *King*'s *College* there, though yet no more than four and twenty. This important function he diſcharged with the greateſt honour, till about his twenty ſeventh year, that he fell into a conſumption, which waſted him by ſlow degrees, and at laſt put an end to his valuable life, on the 13th of *June* 1678, before he had compleated the twenty eight year of his age. He was buried in the *King*'s *College* church *Old Aberdeen*, and the following inſcription was put upon his tomb-ſtone.

Memoriæ Sacrum.

HENRICUS SCOUGAL

Reverendi in Chriſto Patris Patricii

Epiſcopi Aberdonenſis filius;

Philoſophiæ in hac ACADEMIA REGIA,

Per quadriennium, totidemque annis

Ibidem Theologiæ Profeſſor:

Eccleſiæ in Auchterleſs, uno anno interſtite, Paſtor.

Multa in tam breviſſimo curriculo

Didicit, præſtitit, docuit.

Cœli avidus, & cœlo maturus,

Obiit Anno Dom. MDCLXXVIII.

Ætatis ſuæ XXVIII.

Et hic exuvias mortalitatis poſuit.

For a more particular account of our author's life and character we refer the reader to the ſermon preached at his funeral by Dr. *George Gairden*, which was firſt publiſhed, from an authentick manuſcript, by the Rev. Mr. *Cockburn*, ſometime Miniſter of St. *Paul*'s at *Aberdeen*.

This ſmall treatiſe was firſt publiſhed about the year 1677, in our author's lifetime, by the Reverend Dr. *Burnet*, afterward Biſhop of *Sarum*, who introduced it into the world with the following account. "It was "written by a pious and learned countryman of mine, for "the private uſe of a noble friend of the author's, without "the leaſt deſign of making it more publick. Others "ſeeing it, were much taken, both with the excellent "purpoſes it contained, and the great clearneſs and plea-"ſantneſs of the ſtyle; the natural method, and the ſhort-"neſs of it; and deſired it might be made a more publick "good. And knowing ſome intereſt I had with the "author, it was referred to me, whether it ſhould lie in a "private cloſet, or be let go abroad. I was not long in "ſuſpenſe, having read it over; and knowing that the "author had written out nothing here, but what he him-"ſelf did well feel and know: and therefore, it being a "tranſcript of thoſe divine impreſſions that are upon his "own heart, I hope the native and unforced genuinneſs "of it will both delight and edify the reader."

The Reverend Dr. *Gairden*, in our author's funeral-ſermon, ſpeaks much to the ſame effect. "Sure whoever "conſiders the importance of the matter of that book, the "clear repreſentation of the life and ſpirit of true religion, "and its graces, with the great excellency and advantages "of it, the propoſal of the moſt effectual means for attaining

" it by the grace of God, the piety and ſeaſonableneſs of " the devotions, together with the natural and affectionate " eloquence of the ſtyle, cannot but be ſenſible of its " great uſefulneſs to inſpire us with the ſpirit of true re- " ligion, to enlighten our minds with a right ſenſe and " knowledge of it, to warm our hearts with ſuitable af- " fections and breathings after it, and to direct our lives " to the practice of it."

To the ſame purpoſe let us hear the before mentioned Mr. *Cockburn*. " The clear ſtyle and eaſy method of our " author, the juſt and amiable repreſentation he gives of " *religion* in this little *treatiſe*, have made it deſervedly " valued and eſteemed by all judicious perſons: and it has " become a happy means of giving *right notions* of *religion* " to many, making them in love with it, and putting them " upon the practice of what they ſaw was infinitely " deſirable in itſelf, and with ſome pains and induſtry " attainable by them."

The Reverend Dr. *Wiſhart*, principal of the college of *Edinburgh*, publiſhed ſome years ago a ſmall edition of this incomparable treatiſe, with a recommendatory preface, equally pious, candid and judicious; an extract of which will therefore very properly conclude our preface.

" Since I had the happineſs to become acquainted with " *this book*, I have heartily bleſſed God for the benefit I " have received to my own ſoul by the peruſal of it; and " have earneſtly wiſhed it had a place in every family, " was carefully peruſed by every one that can read, and " that the ſentiments of *pure and undefiled religion* it " contains were impreſſed upon every heart.

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" The things which eſpecially recommended the book " to my heart, and which, I think, cannot fail to recom- " mend it to the heart of every ſerious peruſer of it, are, " 1. The juſt notions it contains of real and vital religion, " in oppoſition to the common miſtakes concerning it, and " the view it gives us of that *ingenious ſpirit* which belongs " to true piety; with a juſt allowance, at the ſame time, " to the proper influence of external motives. 2. The " excellency and force of the motives by which true reli- " gion is here recommended, together with the energy and " warmth with which they are delivered. 3. The excel- " lent directions here given, for attaining true piety and " goodneſs. 4. The prudence and charity the worthy au- " thor diſcovers. in avoiding matters of *doubtful diſputa- " tion*, about which the beſt and wiſeſt men differ, while " he is treating of matters of the greateſt importance, a- " bout which all good and wiſe men muſt agree. And oh! " had we more of that true Chriſtian ſpirit, ſo beautifully " delineated and ſo warmly recommended in this book, I " cannot but think, that the fierceneſs of our contentions " and animoſities about things of leſſer moment, muſt con- " ſiderably abate. In fine, that vein of good ſenſe and " clear thought,, and of ſerious piety, which runs through " the whole of this performance, exceedingly commended " it to me.

" For theſe reaſons, I earneſtly recommend this book to " the careful peruſal of all with whom my recommenda- " tion may be of any weight; particularly to the people of " thoſe congregations of which I have had, or now have " the overſight.

" I

" I would, in a particular manner, recommend it to the " riſing generation; in whoſe education I have the honour " to have a conſiderable charge. And oh! that I could be " ſo happy as to make them ſenſible, how much it would " contribute to the peace and ſatisfaction of their whole af- " ter life, to have their minds and hearts early poſſeſſed " of ſuch juſt notions of true piety and goodneſs, and ſuch " a prevailing liking to it, as this excellent book tends to " promote; how much, I ſay, this would conduce to their " true enjoyment in a preſent life, even though we ſhould " ſet aſide the conſideration of that eternal ſtate, to which " we are all haſting apace, and whether the youngeſt of us " knows not how ſoon he may take his flight. The chief " part and valuable end of all true knowledge and lear- " ning, is, the rectifying and improvement of the heart. " I would eſpecially recommend this book to our young " ſtudents who have their views towards the ſacred func- " tion. I cannot but reckon, that the moſt neceſſary part " of preparation for that important work, is, to have ſuch " a juſt underſtanding of the great deſign of religion and " Chriſtianity, and ſuch a taſte of true piety and goodneſs, " as this book tends to inſpire us with. *An honeſt and* " *good heart* is the main thing neceſſary for *preaching* the " word of God, as well as for *hearing* it with profit.

" In fine, I hope I may take the liberty to recommend " it to my younger brethren in the holy miniſtry. The " careful peruſal of this little book may, I hope, contri- " bute to the further improvement of their notions of " religion, and to promote in them that rational piety and " real goodneſs, in which they ought to be *examples* " to their *flocks*. It may alſo afford them excellent hints " to be improven upon, according to the abilities God has " given

" given them, in their publick performances. There are " few paragraphs in this excellent book, but what may " be profitably enlarged into a ſermon. And oh! my " brethren, how may it put us to the bluſh, and what " a holy emulation ſhould it raiſe in us, to know, that the " worthy author of this admirable book compoſed it before " he was twenty-ſeven years of age! what a ſpur to our " diligence, that he came to the end and reward of his " labours before he was eight and twenty!"

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THE LIFE of GOD IN THE SOUL of MAN.

My dear Friend,

THIS deſignation doth give you a title to all the endeavours whereby I can ſerve your intereſts; and your pious inclinations do ſo happily conſpire with my duty, that I ſhall not need to ſtep out of my road to gratify you; but I may at once perform an office of friendſhip, and diſcharge an exerciſe of my function, ſince the advancing of virtue and holineſs (which I hope you make your greateſt ſtudy) is the peculiar buſineſs of my employment. This therefore is the moſt proper inſtance wherein I can vent my affection, and expreſs my gratitude towards you; and I ſhall not any longer delay the performance of the promiſe I made you to this purpoſe. For though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature than any I can offer you; nor are you like to meet with any thing here which

The occaſion of this diſcourſe.

you knew not before; yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleaſed to honour with your friendſhip, and which is more particularly deſigned for your uſe, will be kindly accepted by you; and God's providence perhaps may ſo direct my thoughts, that ſomething or other may prove uſeful to you. Nor ſhall I doubt your pardon, if, for moulding my diſcourſe into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, begining with the nature and properties of religion, and all along give ſuch way to my thoughts, in the proſecution of the ſubject, as may bring me to ſay many things which were not neceſſary, did I only conſider to whom I am writing.

Miſtakes about religion.

I cannot ſpeak of religion, but I muſt lament, that, among ſo many pretenders to it, ſo few underſtand what it means: ſome placing it in the underſtanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is that they are of this or the other perſuaſion, and have joined themſelves to one of thoſe many ſects whereinto Chriſtendom is moſt unhappily divided. Others place it in the outward man, in a conſtant courſe of external duties, and a model of peformances:

performances: if they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, obſerve the returns of worſhip, frequenting the church, or their cloſet, and ſometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have ſufficiently acquitted themſelves. Others again put all religion in the affections, in rapturous heats and ecſtatic devotion; and all they aim at, is to pray with paſſion, and think of heaven with pleaſure, and to be affected with thoſe kind and melting expreſſions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they perſuade themſelves that they are mightily in love with him; and from thence aſſume a great confidence of their ſalvation, which they eſteem the chief of Chriſtian graces. Thus are theſe things which have any reſemblance of piety, and at the beſt are but means of obtaining it, or particular exerciſes of it, frequently miſtaken for the whole of religion; nay ſometimes wickedneſs and vice pretend to that name. I ſpeak not now of thoſe groſs impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worſhip their gods. There are but too many Chriſtians, who would conſecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections; whoſe rugged humour, and ſullen pride muſt paſs for Chriſtian

ſeverity; whoſe fierce wrath, and bitter rage againſt their enemies, muſt be called holy zeal; whoſe petulancy towards their ſuperiors, or rebellion againſt their governors, muſt have the name of Chriſtian courage and reſolution.

What religion is.

But certainly religion is quite another thing; and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and diſdain all thoſe ſhadows and falſe imitations of it, They know by experience, that true religion is an union of the ſoul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the ſoul; or, in the Apoſtle's phraſe, *it is Chriſt formed within us.* Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expreſſed than by calling it *a divine life.* And under theſe terms I ſhall dicourſe of it; ſhewing firſt how it is called *a life*, and then how it is termed *divine.*

Its permanency and ſtability.

I chuſe to expreſs it by the name of *life;* firſt, becauſe of its permanency and ſtability. Religion is not a ſudden ſtart, or paſſion of the mind; not though it ſhould riſe to the height of a rapture, and ſeem to tranſport a man to extraordinary peformances. There are few but have convictions of the neceſſity

neceſſity of doing ſomething for the ſalvation of their ſouls, which may puſh them forward ſome ſteps with a great deal of ſeeming haſte. But anon they flag and give over: they were in a hot mood, but now they are cooled: they did ſhoot forth freſh and high, but are quickly withered, becauſe they had no root in themſelves. Theſe ſudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulſive motions of bodies newly beheaded, cauſed by the agitations of the animal ſpirits, after the ſoul is departed; which however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance: whereas the motions of holy ſouls are conſtant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true, this divine life continueth not always in that ſame ſtrength and vigour, but many times ſuffers ſad decays; and holy men find greater difficulty in reſiſting temptations, and leſs alacrity in the performance of their duties; yet it is not quite extinguiſhed, nor are they abandoned to the power of thoſe corrupt affections which ſway and over-rule the reſt of the world.

Its freedom and unconſtrainedneſs.

Again, religion may be deſigned by the name of *life*, becauſe it is an inward, free, and ſelf-moving principle; and thoſe who have

made progreſs in it, are not acted only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promiſes, nor conſtrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and goodneſs, is not ſo much by virtue of a command injoining him ſo to do, as by a new nature inſtructing and prompting him to it: nor doth he pay his devotion as an unavoidable tribute only to appeaſe the divine juſtice, or quiet his clamorous conſcience; but thoſe religious exerciſes are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employment of the new-born ſoul. He prays, gives thanks, and repents, not only becauſe theſe things, are commanded, but rather becauſe he is ſenſible of his wants, and of the divine goodneſs, and of the folly and miſery of a ſinful life. His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him: his love makes him willing to give; and though there were no outward obligation, his *heart would deviſe liberal things*. Injuſtice or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to *his* temper and conſtitution, as the baſeſt actions are to the moſt generous ſpirit, and impudence and ſcurrility

ſcurrility to thoſe who are naturally modeſt: ſo that I may well ſay with St. *John* *, *Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin; for his ſeed remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God.* Though holy and religious perſons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard to it; yet it is not ſo much the ſanction of the law, as its reaſonableneſs, and purity, and goodneſs, which do prevail with them: they account it excellent and deſirable in itſelf, and that in keeping of it there is great reward; and that divine love wherewith they are acted makes them become a law unto themſelves.

Quis legem det amantibus?
Major eſt amor lex ipſe ſibi.

Who ſhall preſcribe a law to thoſe that love?
Love's a more powerful law which doth them move.

In a word, what our bleſſed Saviour ſaid of himſelf, is in ſome meaſure applicable to his followers, that *it is their meat and drink to do their father's will* †: and as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we ſhould not reflect on the neceſſity of it for the preſervation of our lives; ſo are they carried with a natural

* 1 John iii. 9. † John iv. 34.

natural and unforced propenſion toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great uſe to excite and ſtir up this inward principle, eſpecially in its infancy and weakneſs, when it is often ſo languid, that the man himſelf can ſcarce diſcern it, hardly being able to move one ſtep forward, but when he is puſhed by his hopes, or his fears; by the preſſure of an affliction, or the ſenſe of a mercy; by the authority of the law, or the perſuaſion of others. Now, if ſuch a perſon be conſcientious and uniform in his obedience, and earneſtly groaning under the ſenſe of his dulneſs, and is deſirous to perform his duties with more ſpirit and vigour; theſe are the firſt motions of the divine life, which, though it be faint and weak, will ſurely be cheriſhed by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly deſtitute of this inward principle, and doth not aſpire unto it, but contents himſelf with thoſe performances whereunto he is prompted by education or cuſtom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be accounted a religious perſon, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid,

guid, like the motion of a weight forced upward: it is cold and ſpiritleſs, like the uneaſy compliance of a wife married againſt her will, who carries it dutifully toward the huſband whom ſhe doth not love, out of ſome ſenſe of virtue or honour. Hence alſo this religion is ſcant and niggardly, eſpecially in thoſe duties which do greateſt violence to mens carnal inclinations; and thoſe ſlaviſh ſpirits will be ſure to do no more, than is abſolutely required: it is a law that compells them, and they will be loth to go beyond what it ſtints them to, nay, they will ever be putting ſuch gloſſes on it, as may leave themſelves the greateſt liberty: whereas the ſpirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from ſuch peeviſh and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himſelf entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that religion is with a great deal of reaſon termed a *life*, or vital principle; and that it is very neceſſary to diſtinguiſh betwixt it, and that obedience which is conſtrained, and depends on external cauſes. I come next to give an account why I deſigned it by the name of *divine* life. And ſo it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and

Religion a divine principle.

and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the ſouls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but alſo in regard of its nature, religion being a reſemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty ſhining in the ſoul of man: nay it is a real participation of his nature; it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodneſs, and they who are endued with it, may be ſaid to have *God dwelling in their ſouls, and Chriſt formed within them.*

What the natural life is.

Before I deſcend to a more particular conſideration of the divine life wherein true religion doth conſiſt, it will perhaps be fit to ſpeak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in thoſe who are ſtrangers to the other. And by this I underſtand nothing elſe, but our inclination and propenſion towards thoſe things which are pleaſing and acceptable to nature; or ſelf-love iſſuing forth and ſpreading itſelf into as many branches as men have ſeveral appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life I reckon to be *ſenſe*, taking it largely, as it is oppoſed unto faith, and importeth our perception and ſenſation of things that are either grateful or troubleſome to us. Now, theſe a-

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nimal affections conſidered in themſelves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vitious or blameable; nay, they are inſtances of the wiſdom of the creator furniſhing his creatures with ſuch appetites as tend to the preſervation and welfare of their lives. Theſe are inſtead of a law unto the brute beaſts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made. But man, being made for higher purpoſes, and to be guided by more excellent laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is ſo far tranſported by the inclinations of this lower life, as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble deſigns of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and deſtroyed, but only to be moderated and over ruled by a ſuperior and more excellent principle. In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and wicked man, is, that in the one the divine life bears ſway, in the other the animal life doth prevail.

The different tendencies of the natural life.

But it is ſtrange to obſerve unto what different courſes this natural principle will ſometimes carry thoſe who are wholly guided by it, according to the divers circumſtances that concur with it to determine

mine them: and the not conſidering this, doth frequently occaſion very dangerous miſtakes, making men think well of themſelves by reaſon of that ſeeming difference which is betwixt them and others; whereas perhaps their actions do all the while flow from one and the ſame original. If we conſider the natural temper and conſtitution of mens ſouls, we ſhall find ſome to be airy, frolickſom, and light, which makes their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally ſerious and ſevere, and their whole carriage compoſed into ſuch gravity as gains them a great deal of reverence and eſteem. Some are of an humorous, rugged, and moroſe temper, and can neither be pleaſed themſelves, nor endure that others ſhould be ſo. But all are not born with ſuch ſour and unhappy diſpoſitions; for ſome perſons have a certain ſweetneſs and benignity rooted in their natures, and they find the greateſt pleaſure in the endearments of ſociety, and the mutual complacency of friends, and covet nothing more than to have every body obliged to them. And it is well that nature hath provided this complexional tenderneſs to ſupply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do ſomething for one another

ther's welfare. Again, in regard of education, ſome have never been taught to follow any other rules, than thoſe of pleaſure or advantage: but others are ſo inured to obſerve the ſtricteſt rules of decency and honour, and ſome inſtances of virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accuſtomed to look upon as baſe and unworthy.

In fine, it is no ſmall difference in the deportment of mere natural men, that doth ariſe from the ſtrength or weakneſs of their wit or judgment, and from their care or negligence in uſing them. Intemperance and luſt, injuſtice and oppreſſion, and all thoſe other impieties which abound in the world, and render it ſo miſerable, are the iſſues of ſelf-love, the effect of the *animal life*, when it is neither overpowered by religion, nor governed by natural reaſon. But if it once take hold of reaſon, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times diſdain the groſſer ſort of vices, and ſpring up unto fair imitations of virtue and goodneſs. If a man have but ſo much reaſon as to conſider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate luſt do bring unto his health, his fortune, and his reputation, ſelf love may ſuffice

to reſtrain him; and one may obſerve the rules of moral juſtice in dealing with others, as the beſt way to ſecure his own intereſt, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all. This natural principle, by the help of reaſon, may take a higher flight, and come nigher the inſtances of piety and religion. It may incline a man to the diligent ſtudy of divine truths; for why ſhould not theſe, as well as other ſpeculations, be pleaſant and grateful to curious and inquiſitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating ſuch opinions as they have eſpouſed, and be very deſirous that others ſhould ſubmit unto their judgment, and approve the choice of religion which themſelves have made. It may make them delight to hear and compoſe excellent diſcourſes about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleaſant whatever be the ſubject. Nay, ſome it may diſpoſe to no ſmall height of ſenſible devotion. The glorious things that are ſpoken of heaven, may make even a carnal heart in love with it; the metaphors and ſimilitudes made uſe of in ſcripture, of crowns and ſceptres, and rivers of pleaſure, *&c.* will eaſily affect a man's fancy, and make him wiſh to be there, though he

he neither underſtand nor deſire thoſe ſpiritual pleaſures which are deſcribed and ſhadowed forth by them; and when ſuch a perſon comes to believe that Chriſt has purchaſed thoſe glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderneſs and affection towards ſo great a benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily enamoured with him, and yet all the while continue a ſtranger to the holy temper and ſpirit of the bleſſed Jeſus. And what hand the natural conſtitution may have in the rapturous devotion of ſome melancholy perſons, hath been excellently diſcovered of late by ſeveral learned and judicious pens.

To conclude: There is nothing proper to make a man's life pleaſant, or himſelf eminent and conſpicuous in the world, but this natural principle, aſſiſted by wit and reaſon, may prompt him to it. And though I do not condemn theſe things in themſelves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and conſider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and alſo that we may learn never to value ourſelves on the account of ſuch attainments, nor lay the ſtreſs of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

Wherein the divine life doth consist.

It is now time to return to the consideration of that *divine life* whereof I was discoursing before; that *life which is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore hath no glorious shew or appearance in the world, and to the natural man will seem a mean and insipid notion. As the Animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension towards those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in an universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blameable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are, love to God, charity to man, purity, and humility: for (as an excellent person hath well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound; yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. *Faith* hath the same place in the divine life which *sense* hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things. It extends itself unto all divine

vine truths; but, in our lapſed eſtate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcileableneſs to ſinners through a Mediator; and therefore, receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed *faith in Jeſus Chriſt.*

The *love* of God is a delightful and affectionate ſenſe of the divine perfections, which makes the ſoul reſign and ſacrifice itſelf wholly unto him, deſiring above all things to pleaſe him, and delighting in nothing ſo much as in fellowſhip and communion with him, and being ready to do or ſuffer any thing for his ſake, or at his pleaſure. Though this affection may have its firſt riſe from the favours and mercies of God towards ourſelves, yet doth it in its growth and progreſs tranſcend ſuch particular conſiderations, and ground itſelf on his infinite goodneſs manifeſted in all the works of creation and providence. A ſoul thus poſſeſſed with divine love, muſt needs be enlarged towards all mankind in a ſincere and unbounded affection, becauſe of the relation they have to God, being his creatures, and having ſomething of his image ſtamped upon them. And this is that *charity* I named as the ſecond branch of religion, and under which all the parts

of juſtice, all the duties we owe to our neighbour, are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world, will be nearly concerned in the intereſt of every one; and ſo far from wronging or injuring any perſon, that he will reſent any evil that befals others, as if it happened to himſelf.

By *purity*, I underſtand a due abſtractedneſs from the body, and maſtery over the inferior appetites; or ſuch a temper and diſpoſition of mind, as makes a man deſpiſe and abſtain from all pleaſures and delights of ſenſe or fancy which are ſinful in themſelves, or tend to extinguiſh or leſſen our reliſh of more divine and intellectual pleaſures which doth alſo infer a reſoluteneſs to undergo all thoſe hardſhips he may meet with in the performance of his duty. So that not only chaſtity and temperance, but alſo chriſtian courage and magnanimity may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep ſenſe of our own meanneſs, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty; which is always accompanied with a profound ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and great deadneſs towards the glory of the world, and applauſe of men.

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These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of, the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul. And he who hath attained them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven, to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him; and those beginnings of happiness which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, and compliance with his will, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity. And it is not without reason that one said, *I had rather see the real impression of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name were inrolled in the book of life.*

When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently expressed; language and words cannot reach them; nor can they be truly understood but by those souls that are inkindled

Religion better understood by actions than by words.

inkindled within, and awakened unto the ſenſe and reliſh of ſpiritual things. *There is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth this underſtanding.* The power and life of religion may be better expreſſed in actions than in words; becauſe actions are more lively things, and do better repreſent the inward principle whence they proceed: and therefore we may take the beſt meaſure of thoſe gracious endowments from the deportment of thoſe in whom they reſide; eſpecially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our bleſſed Saviour; a main part of whoſe buſineſs in this world, was, to teach by his practice what he did require of others, and to make his own converſation an exact reſemblance of thoſe unparallelled rules which he preſcribed: ſo that if ever true goodneſs was viſible to mortal eyes, it was then when his preſence did beautify and illuſtrate this lower world.

Divine love exemplified in our saviour.

That ſincere and devout affection wherewith his bleſſed ſoul did conſtantly burn towards his heavenly Father, did expreſs itſelf in an entire reſignation to his will. It was this was his *very meat, to do the will, and finiſh the work of him that*

that ſent him. This was the exerciſe of his childhood, and the conſtant employment of his riper age. He ſpared no travail or pains while he was about his Father's buſineſs, but took ſuch infinite content and ſatisfaction in the performance of it, that when, being faint and weary with his journey, he reſted himſelf on *Jacob*'s well, and intreated water of the *Samaritan* woman, the ſucceſs of his conference with her, and the acceſſion that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with ſuch delight, as ſeemed to have redounded to his very body, refreſhing his ſpirits, and making him forget the thirſt whereof he complained before, and refuſe the meat which he had ſent his diſciples to buy. Nor was he leſs patient and ſubmiſſive in ſuffering the will of God, than diligent in doing of it. He endured the ſharpeſt afflictions and extremeſt miſeries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or diſcontented word. For though he was far from a ſtupid inſenſibility, or a phantaſtick or ſtoical obſtinacy, and had as quick a ſenſe of pain as other men, and the deepeſt apprehenſion of what he was to ſuffer in his ſoul,

His diligence in doing God's will.

His patience in bearing it.

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(as his *bloody ſweat*, and the *ſore amazement and ſorrow* which he profeſſed, do abundantly declare); yet did he entirely ſubmit to that ſevere diſpenſation of providence, and willingly acquieſced in it.

And he prayed to God, that *if it were poſſible* (or as one of the Evangeliſts hath it, *if he were willing*) *that cup might be removed*; yet he gently added, *Nevertheleſs, not my will, but thine be done.* Of what ſtrange importance are the expreſſions, *John* xii. 27.? where he firſt acknowledgeth the anguiſh of his ſpirit, *Now is my ſoul troubled*; which would ſeem to produce a kind of demur, *And what ſhall I ſay?* and then he goes to deprecate his ſufferings, *Father ſave me from this hour*; which he had no ſooner uttered, but he doth as it were, on ſecond thoughts, recal it, in theſe words, *But for this cauſe came I into the world*; and concludes, *Father glorify thy name.* Now, we muſt not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakneſs in the bleſſed Jeſus. He knew all along what he was to ſuffer, and did moſt reſolutely undergo it. But it ſhews us the unconceivable weight and preſſure that he was to bear; which, being ſo afflicting, and contrary to nature, he could not think of without terror: yet

yet, conſidering the will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content, but deſirous to ſuffer it.

His conſtant devotion.

Another inſtance of his love to God, was his delight in converſing with him by prayer; which made him frequently retire himſelf from the world, and with the greateſt devotion and pleaſure ſpend whole nights in that heavenly exerciſe, though he had no ſins to confeſs, and but few ſecular intereſts to pray for; which alas! are almoſt the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions. Nay, we may ſay his whole life was a kind of prayer, a conſtant courſe of communion with God; if the ſacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire ſtill kept alive: nor was ever the bleſſed Jeſus ſurpriſed with that dulneſs or tepidity of ſpirit which we muſt many times wreſtle with, before we can be fit for the exerciſe of devotion.

His charity to men.

In the *ſecond* place, I ſhould ſpeak of his love and charity towards all men. But he who would expreſs it, muſt tranſcribe the hiſtory of the goſpel, and comment upon it: for ſcarce any thing is recorded to have been done or ſpoken by him, which was not

not deſigned for the good and advantage of ſome one or other. All his miraculous works were inſtances of his goodneſs, as well as of his power; and they benefited thoſe on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred or relations; nor was all his kindneſs ſwallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendſhip which he carried towards the beloved diſciple, but every one was his *friend* who obeyed his *holy commands*, *John* xv. 14.; and *whoſoever did the will of his Father*, the ſame was to him as *his brother, and ſiſter, and mother.*

Never was any unwelcome to him who came with an honeſt intention; nor did he deny any requeſt which tended to the good of thoſe that aſked it. So that what was ſpoken of the *Roman* Emperor, whom for his goodneſs they called the *darling of mankind*, was realy performed by him; that never any departed from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth, *Mark* x. who was ſorry to hear that the kingdom of heaven ſtood at ſo high a rate, and that he could not ſave his ſoul and his money too. And certainly it troubled our Saviour, to ſee that when a price was in his hand to get wiſdom, yet he had no heart

heart to it. The ingenuity that appeared in his firſt addreſs had already procured ſome kindneſs for him; for it is ſaid, *And Jeſus beholding him, loved him.* But muſt he for his ſake cut out a new way to heaven, and alter the nature of things, which make it impoſſible that a covetous man ſhould be happy?

And what ſhall I ſpeak of his meekneſs, who could encounter the monſtrous ingratitude and diſſimulation of that miſcreant who betrayed him, in no harſher terms than this, *Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of man with a kiſs?* What further evidence could we deſire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life even for his moſt bitter enemies; and, mingling his prayers with his blood, beſought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life to thoſe very perſons who procured it?

The third branch of the divine life is *purity*; which, as I ſaid, conſiſts in a neglect of worldy enjoyments and accommodations, and a reſolute enduring of all ſuch troubles as we meet with in the doing of our duty. Now, ſurely, if ever any perſon was wholly dead to all the pleaſures of the natural life, it

His purity.

was the bleſſed Jeſus, who ſeldom taſted them when they came in his way, but never ſtepped out of his road to ſeek them. Though he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his preſence; yet he choſe the ſeverity of a virgin life, and never knew the nuptial bed; and though at the ſame time he ſupplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderneſs: ſo gracious and divine was the temper of his ſoul, allowing to others ſuch lawful gratifications as himſelf thought good to abſtain from, and ſupplying not only their more extreme and preſſing neceſſities, but alſo their ſmall and leſs conſiderable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's ſighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laughed, and but once that he rejoiced in ſpirit; ſo that through his whole life he did exactly anſwer that character given of him by the prophet of old, that he was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.* Nor were the troubles and diſaccommodations of his life other than matters of choice. For never did there any appear on the ſtage of the world with greater advantages to have raiſed himſelf to the higheſt ſecular felicity. He who could bring together ſuch

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a prodigious number of fiſhes into his diſciples net, and at another time receive that tribute from a fiſh which he was to pay to the temple, might eaſily have made himſelf the richeſt perſon of the world. Nay, without any money he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have juſtled *Cæſar* out of his throne; having oftner than once fed ſeveral thouſands with a few loaves and ſmall fiſhes. But to ſhew how ſmall eſteem he had of all the enjoyments of the world, he choſe to live in ſo poor and mean a condition, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had neſts, yet he who was lord and heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head.* He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance and converſe of great ones; but, being reputed the ſon of a carpenter, he had fiſhermen and ſuch other poor people for his companions, and lived at ſuch a rate as ſuited with the meanneſs of that condition.

His humility.

And thus I am brought unawares to ſpeak of his *humility*, the laſt branch of the divine life; wherein he was a moſt eminent patern unto us, that we might *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.* I ſhall not now ſpeak of that infinite condeſcenſion of the eternal Son

of God, in taking our nature upon him; but only reflect on our Saviour's lowly and humble deportment while he was in the world. He had none of thoſe ſins and imperfections which may juſtly humble the beſt of men; but he was ſo entirely ſwallowed up with a deep ſenſe of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes, I mean, ſo far as he was a creature. He conſidered thoſe eminent perfections which ſhined in his bleſſed ſoul, not as his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore aſſumed nothing to himſelf for them, but with the profoundeſt humility renounced all pretences to them. Hence did he refuſe that ordinary compellation of *good maſter*, when addreſſed to his human nature by one who it ſeems was ignorant of his divinity: *Why calleſt thou me good? there is none good, but God only:* As if he had ſaid, The goodneſs of any creature (and ſuch only thou takeſt me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of; it is God alone who is originally and eſſentially good. He never made uſe of his miraculous power for vanity or oſtentation. He would not gratify the curioſity of the *Jews* with a ſign from heaven, ſome prodigious appearance in the air: nor would he follow the advice

advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have had all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame. But when his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times injoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribeth the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *that of himself he was able to do nothing.*

I cannot insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment towards men; his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a king, his subjection not only to his blessed mother, but to her husband, during his younger years; and his submission to all the indignities and affronts which his rude and malicious enemies did put upon him. The history of his holy life, recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these. And indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of humility, and all the other parts of religion which I have been endeavouring to describe.

But now, that I may leſſen your trouble of reading a letter, by making ſome pauſes in it, let me here ſubjoin a prayer that might be proper when one who had formerly entertained ſome falſe notions of religion, begins to diſcover what it is.

A PRAYER.

INfinite and eternal Majeſty, author and fountain of being and bleſſedneſs, how little do we poor ſinful creatures know of thee, or the way to ſerve and p'eaſe thee! We talk of religion, and pretend unto it: but alas! how few are there that know and conſider what it means! How eaſily do we miſtake the affections of our nature, and iſſues of ſelf-love, for thoſe divine graces which alone can render us acceptable in thy ſight! It may juſtly grieve me, to conſider, that I ſhould have wandered ſo long, and contented my ſelf ſo often with vain ſhadows and fa ſe images of piety and rel gion: yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodneſs, who haſt been p eaſed in ſome meaſure to open mine eyes, and let me ſee what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to conſider what mighty improvements my nature is capab e of, and what a divine temper of ſpirit do ſhine in thoſe whom thou art pleaſ-

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ed to chuſe, and cauſeſt to aproach unto thee. Bleſſed be thine infinite mercy, who ſenteſt thine own Son to dwell among men, and inſtruct them by his example as well as his laws, giving them a perfect patern of what they ought to be. O that the holy life of the bleſſed Jeſus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep ſenſe and impreſſion of thoſe excellent graces that ſhined ſo eminently in him; and let me never ceaſe my endeavours till that new and divine nature prevail in my ſoul, and Chriſt be formed within me.

AND now, my dear friend, having diſcovered the nature of true religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it; that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent proſecution of thoſe methods whereby we may attain ſo great a felicity. But alas! what words ſhall we find to expreſs that inward ſatisfaction, thoſe hidden pleaſures which can never be rightly underſtood, but by thoſe holy ſouls who feel them? *A ſtranger intermeddeth not with their joy* *. Holineſs is the right temper

The excellency and advantage of religion.

* Prov. xiv. 10.

temper the vigorous and healthful conſtitution of the ſoul. Its faculties had been formerly enfeebled and diſordered, ſo that they could not exerciſe their natural functions; it had wearied itſelf with endleſs toſſings and rollings, and was never able to find any reſt: now, that diſtemper being removed, it feels itſelf well; there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a ſprightly vigour poſſeſſeth every part. The underſtanding can diſcern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it: the affections are not tied to the motions of ſenſe, and the influence of external objects; but they are ſtirred by more divine impreſſions, are touched by a ſenſe of inviſible things.

The excellency of divine love.

Let us deſcend, if you pleaſe, into a nearer and more particular view of religion, in thoſe ſeveral branches of it which were named before. Let us conſider that love and affection wherewith holy ſouls are united to God, that we may ſee what excellency and felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent paſſion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the ſoul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happineſs depend. The worth and excellency of a ſoul is to be

be meaſured by the object of its love. He who loveth mean and ſordid things, doth thereby become baſe and vile; but a noble and well placed affection, doth advance and improve the ſpirit unto a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of theſe do frequently preſent themſelves unto the mind, and, by a ſecret force and energy, inſinuate into the very conſtitution of the ſoul, and mould and faſhion it unto their own likeneſs. Hence we may ſee how eaſily lovers or friends do ſlide into the imitation of the perſons whom they affect, and how, even before they are aware, they reſemble them, not only in the more conſiderable inſtances of their deportment, but alſo in their voice and geſture, and that which we call their mien and air. And certainly we ſhould as well tranſcribe the virtues and inward beauties of the ſoul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But now, as all the creatures we converſe with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be ſullied and corrupted by placing our affection on them. Paſſion doth eaſily blind our eyes, ſo that we firſt approve, and then imitate the things that are blameable in them. The true way to improve and ennoble our ſouls, is,

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by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impreſſion of them on ourſelves, and *beholding with open face, as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory.* He who with a generous and holy ambition hath raiſed his eyes towards that uncreated beauty and goodneſs, and fixed his affection there, is quite of another ſpirit, of a more excellent and heroick temper than the reſt of the world; and cannot but infinitely diſdain all mean and unworthy things; will not entertain any low or baſe thoughts which might diſparage his high and noble pretenſions. Love is the greateſt and moſt excellent thing we are maſters of; and therefore it is folly and baſneſs to beſtow it unworthily. It is indeed the only thing we can call our own. Other things may be taken from us by violence; but none can raviſh our love. If any thing elſe be counted ours, by giving our love we give all, ſo far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we poſſeſs our other enjoyments. It is not poſſible to refuſe him any thing, to whom by love we have given ourſelves. Nay, ſince it is the privilege of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver,

giver, and not to be meaſured by the event, but by the deſire; he who loveth may in ſome ſenſe be ſaid not only to beſtow all he hath, but all things elſe which may make the beloved perſon happy, ſince he doth heartily wiſh them, and would readily give them, if they were in his power. In which ſenſe it is that one makes bold to ſay, *That divine love doth in a manner give God unto himſelf, by the complacency it takes in the happineſs and perfection of his nature.* But though this may ſeem too ſtrained an expreſſion, certainly love is the worthieſt preſent we can offer unto God; and it is extremely debaſed when we beſtow it another way.

When this affection is miſplaced, it doth often vent itſelf in ſuch expreſſions as point at its genuine and proper object, and inſinuate where it ought to be placed. The flattering and blaſphemous terms of adoration wherein men do ſometimes expreſs their paſſion, are the language of that affection which was made and deſigned for God; as he who is accuſtomed to ſpeak to ſome great perſon, doth perhaps unawares accoſt another with thoſe titles he was wont to give to him. But certainly that paſſion which accounteth its object a Deity, ought to be beſtowed on him who

who really is ſo. Thoſe unlimited ſubmiſſions, which would debaſe the ſoul if directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it when placed here. Thoſe chains and cords of love are infinitely more glorious than liberty itſelf; this ſlavery is more noble than all the empires in the world.

The advantages of divine love.

Again, As divine love doth advance and elevate the ſoul, ſo it is that alſo which can make it happy. The higheſt and moſt raviſhing pleaſures, the moſt ſolid and ſubſtantial delights, that human nature is capable of, are thoſe which ariſe from the endearments of a well-placed and ſucceſsful affection. That which imbitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troubleſome and hurtful paſſion, is, the placing it on thoſe who have not worth enough to deſerve it, or affection and gratitude to requite it, or whoſe abſence may deprive us of the pleaſure of their converſe, or their miſeries occaſion our trouble. To all theſe evils are they expoſed, whoſe chief and ſupreme affection is placed on creatures like themſelves; but the love of God delivers us from them all.

The worth of the object.

Firſt, I ſay, love muſt needs be miſerable, and full of trouble and diſquietude, when there is not worth and excellency enough in the

the object to answer the vastness of its capacity. So eager and violent a passion cannot but fret and torment the spirit, where it finds not wherewith to satisfy its cravings. And indeed so large and unbounded is its nature, that it must be extremely pinched and straitened, when confined to any creature: nothing below an infinite good can afford it room to stretch itself, and exert its vigour and activity. What is a little skin deep beauty, or some small degrees of goodness, to match or satisfy a passion that was made for God; designed to embrace an infinite good? No wonder lovers do so hardly suffer any rival, and do not desire that others should approve their passion by imitating it. They know the scantiness and narrowness of the good which they love, that it cannot suffice two, being in effect too little for one. Hence love *which is strong as death*, occasioneth *jealousy which is cruel as the grave;* the coals whereof are coals of fire which hath a most violent flame.

But divine love hath no mixture of this gall. When once the soul is fixed on that supreme and all-sufficient good, it finds so much perfection and goodness, as doth not only answer and satisfy its affection, but master and overpower it too: it finds all its

love to be too faint and languid for such a noble object, and is only sorry that it can command no more. It wishes for the flames of a *seraph*, and longs for the time when it shall be wholly melted and dissolved into love; and because it can do so little itself, it desires the assistance of the whole creation, that angels and men would concur with it in the admiration and love of those infinite perfections.

The certainty to be beloved again.

Again, love is accompanied with troubles, when it misseth a suitable return of affection. Love is the most valuable thing we can bestow; and by giving it, we do in effect give all that we have: and therefore it must needs be afflicting, to find so great a gift despised, that the present which one hath made of his whole heart, cannot prevail to obtain any return. Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interests; not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves. Thus he is quite undone unless he meets with reciprocal affection. He neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him. But if

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he be beloved, he is revived, as it were, and liveth in the ſoul and care of the perſon whom he loves: and now he begins to mind his own concernments, not ſo much becauſe they are his, as becauſe the beloved is pleaſed to own an intereſt in them. He becomes dear unto himſelf, becauſe he is ſo unto the other.

But why ſhould I enlarge in ſo known a matter? Nothing can be more clear, than that the happineſs of love depends on the return it meets with. And herein the divine lover, hath unſpeakably the advantage, having placed his affection on him whoſe nature is love; whoſe goodneſs is as infinite as his being; whoſe mercy prevented us when we were his enemies, therefore cannot chuſe but embrace us when we are become his friends. It is utterly impoſſible that God ſhould deny his love to a ſoul wholly devoted to him, and which deſires nothing ſo much as to ſerve and pleaſe him. He cannot diſdain his own image, nor the heart in which it is engraven. Love is all the tribute which we can pay him, and it is the ſacrifice which he will not deſpiſe.

Another thing which disturbs the pleasure of love, and renders it a miserable and unquiet passion is absence and separation from those we love. It is not without a sensible affliction that friends do part, though for some little time. It is sad to be deprived of that society which is so delightful; our life becomes tedious, being spent in an impatient expectation of the happy hour wherein we may meet again. But if death have made the separation, as some time or other it must, this occasions a grief scarce to be parallelled by all the misfortunes of human life, and wherein we pay dear enough for the comforts of our friendship. But O how happy are those who have placed their love on him who can never be absent from them! They need but open their eyes, and they shall every where behold the traces of his presence and glory, and converse with him whom their soul loveth. And this makes the darkest prison, or wildest desart, not only supportable but delightful to them.

The presence of the beloved person.

In fine, A lover is miserable if the person whom he loveth be so. They who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one another's

The divine love makes us partake of an infinite happiness.

another's happineſs and miſery: and this makes love a troubleſome paſſion when placed on earth. The moſt fortunate perſon hath grief enough to marr the tranquility of his friend; and it is hard to hold it out, when we are attacked on all hands, and ſuffer not only in our own perſon, but in another's. But if God were the object of our love, we ſhould ſhare in an infinite happineſs, without any mixture or poſſibility of diminution; we ſhould rejoice to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleaſure from all the praiſes wherewith men and angels do extol him. It ſhould delight us beyond all expreſſion, to conſider, that the beloved of our ſouls is infinitely happy in himſelf, and that all his enemies cannot ſhake or unſettle his throne; *that our God is in the heavens, and doth whatſoever he pleaſeth.*

Behold! on what ſure foundations his happineſs is built, whoſe ſoul is poſſeſſed with divine love, whoſe will is transformed into the will of God, and whoſe greateſt deſire is, that his maker ſhould be pleaſed. O the peace, the reſt, the ſatisfaction that attendeth ſuch a temper of mind!

He that loveth God, finds ſweetneſs in every diſpenſation.

What an infinite pleaſure muſt it needs be, thus, as it were, to loſe ourſelves in him, and, being ſwallowed up in the overcoming ſenſe of his goodneſs, to offer our ſelves a living ſacrifice, always aſcending unto him in flames of love! Never doth a ſoul know what ſolid joy and ſubſtantial pleaſure is, till, once being weary of itſelf, it renounce all propriety, give itſelf up unto the author of its being, and feel itſelf become a hallowed and devoted thing; and can ſay from an inward ſenſe and feeling, *My beloved is mine*,(I account all his intereſt mine own), *and I am his*: I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for myſelf, but that I may ſerve him. A perſon moulded into this temper. would find pleaſure in all the diſpenſations of providence. Temporal enjoyments would have another reliſh, when he ſhould taſte the divine goodneſs in them, and conſider them as tokens of love ſent by his deareſt Lord and maker. And chaſtiſements, though they be not joyous but grievous, would hereby loſs their ſting: the rod as well as the ſtaff would comfort him: he would ſnatch a kiſs from the hand that was ſmiting him, and gather ſweetneſs from

from that ſeverity. Nay, he would rejoice that though God did not the will of ſuch a worthleſs and fooliſh creature as himſelf, yet he did his own will, and accompliſhed his own deſigns, which are infinitely more holy and wiſe.

The exerciſes of religion, which to others are inſipid and tedious, do yield the higheſt pleaſure and delight to ſouls poſſeſſed with divine love. They rejoice when they are called to *go up to the houſe of the Lord*, that they may *ſee his power and his glory, as they have formerly ſeen it in his ſanctuary**. They never think themſelves ſo happy as when having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noiſe and hurry of affairs, and ſilenced all their clamorous paſſions, (thoſe troubleſome gueſts within), they have placed themſelves in the preſence of God, and entertain fellowſhip and communion with him. They delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favours, and to proteſt their affection to him, and tell him a thouſand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and diſburthen their hearts in his boſom. Repentance itſelf is a delightful exerciſe, when it floweth from the principle

The duties of relgion are delightful to him.

* Pſal. lxiii. 2.

ciple of love: there is a ſecret ſweetneſs which accompanieth thoſe tears of remorſe, thoſe meltings and relentings of a ſoul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindneſs.

The ſeverities of holy life, and that conſtant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are very troubleſome to thoſe who are only ruled and acted by an external law and have no law in their minds inclining them to the performance of their duty. But where divine love poſſeſſeth the ſoul, it ſtands as centinel to keep out every thing that may offend the beloved, and doth diſdainfully repulſe thoſe temptations which aſſault it. It complieth chearfully, not only with explicit commands, but with the moſt ſecret notices of the beloved's pleaſure; and is ingenious in diſcovering what will be moſt grateful and acceptable unto him. It makes mortification and ſelf-denial change their harſh and dreadful names, and become eaſy, ſweet and delightful things.

But I find this part of my letter ſwell bigger than I deſigned: (indeed who would not be tempted to dwell on ſo pleaſant a theme?) I ſhall endeavour to compenſate it by brevity in the other points.

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The next branch of the divine life is an universal charity and love. The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged. The excellency of charity.

For what can be more noble and generous than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interests as its own? He who loveth his neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him. The malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love, he overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good; and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be reverenced and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable

amiable and lovely. It inſpireth the ſoul with a noble reſolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterpriſing and effecting the higheſt things. Thoſe heroick actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have for the moſt part been the effects of the love of one's country, or of particular friendſhips; and certainly a more extenſive and univerſal affection muſt be much more powerful and efficacious.

The pleaſure that attends it.

Again, as charity flows from a noble and excellent temper, ſo it is accompanied with the greateſt ſatisfaction and pleaſure. It delights the ſoul to feel itſelf thus enlarged, and to be delivered from thoſe diſquieting as well as deforming paſſions, malice, hatred, and envy; and become gentle, ſweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to my preſent felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart poſſeſſed with the greateſt kindneſs and affection towards all men in the world. I am ſure this would make me partake in all the happineſs of others; their inward endowments, and outward proſperity; every thing that did benefit and advantage them, would afford me comfort and pleaſure. And though I ſhould frequently

quently meet with occaſions of grief and compaſſion, yet there is a ſweetneſs in commiſeration, which makes it infinitely more deſirable than a ſtupid inſenſibility: and the conſideration of that infinite goodneſs and wiſdom which governs the world, might repreſs any exceſſive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it: and the hopes or poſſibility of mens after happineſs, might moderate their ſorrow for their preſent misfortunes. Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith bleſſed ſouls do embrace one anther, is juſtly to be reckoned as the greateſt felicity of thoſe regions above: and did it univerſally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that bleſſedneſs, and make us taſte of the joys of heaven upon earth.

The excellency of purity.

That which I named as a third branch of religion, was purity: and you may remember I deſcribed it to conſiſt in a contempt of ſenſual pleaſures, and reſoluteneſs to undergo thoſe troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now, the naming of this may ſuffice to recommend it as a moſt noble and excellent quality. There is no ſlavery ſo baſe, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his

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own luſts; nor any victory ſo glorious, as that which is obtained over them. Never can that perſon be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is ſunk in the groſs and feculent pleaſures of ſenſe, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy. But the religious ſoul is of a more ſublime and divine temper; it knows it was made for higher things, and ſcorns to ſtep aſide one foot out of the ways of holineſs for the obtaining any of theſe.

The delight it affords.

And this purity is accompanied with a great deal of pleaſure. Whatſoever defiles the ſoul, diſturbs it too. All impure delights have a ſting in them, and leave ſmart and trouble behind them. Exceſs and intemperance, and all inordinate luſts, are ſo much enemies to the health of the body, and the intereſts of this preſent life, that a little conſideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very ſcore. And if the religious perſon go higher, and do not only abſtain from noxious pleaſures, but neglect thoſe that are innocent; this is not to be looked upon as any violent and uneaſy reſtraint, but as the effect of better choice; that their minds are taken up in the purſuit of

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more ſublime and refined delights, ſo that they cannot be concerned in theſe. Any perſon that is engaged in a violent and paſſionate affection, will eaſily forget his ordinary gratifications; will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily eaſe, or the divertiſements he was wonted to delight in. No wonder, then, if ſouls overpowered with divine love, deſpiſe inferior pleaſures, and be almoſt ready to grudge the body its neceſſary attendance for the common accommodations of life; judging all theſe impertinent to their main happineſs, and thoſe higher enjoyments they are purſuing. As for the hardſhips they may meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exerciſe and teſtify their affection: and ſince they are able to do ſo little for God, they are glad of the honour to ſuffer for him.

The laſt branch of religion is humility. And however to vulgar and carnal eyes this may appear an abject, baſe and deſpicable quality; yet really the ſoul of man is not capable of an higher and more noble endowment. It is a ſilly ignorance that begets pride: but humility ariſes from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things; which keeps men from doating on trifles, or ad-

The excellency of humility.

miring themſelves, becauſe of ſome petty attainments. Noble and well educated ſouls have no ſuch high opinion of riches, beauty, ſtrength, and other ſuch like advantages, as to value themſelves for them, or deſpiſe thoſe that want them. And as for inward worth, and real goodneſs, the ſenſe they have of the divine perfections, makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attained; and be ſtill endeavouring to ſurmount themſelves, and make nearer approaches to thoſe infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility; but I ſee almoſt every perſon pretending to it, and ſhunning ſuch expreſſions and actions, as may make them be accounted arrogant and preſumptuous; ſo that thoſe who are moſt deſirous of praiſe, will be loth to commend themſelves. What are all thoſe compliments and modes of civility, ſo frequent in our ordinary converſe, but ſo many proteſtations of the eſteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of ourſelves? And muſt not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very ſhadows of it are accounted ſo neceſſary a part of good breeding?

Again,

Again, this grace is accompanied with a great deal of happineſs and tranquillity. The proud and arrogant perſon is a trouble to all that converſe with him, but moſt of all unto himſelf. Every thing is enough to vex him; but ſcarce any thing ſufficient to content and pleaſe him. He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out; as if he himſelf were ſuch a conſiderable perſon, that God Almighty ſhould do every thing to gratify him; and all the creatures of heaven and earth ſhould wait upon him, and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do ſhake with every blaſt of wind, and every breath; every evil word will diſquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble perſon hath the advantage, when he is deſpiſed, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth himſelf; and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can eaſily bear thoſe reproaches which wound the other to the ſoul. And withal, as he is leſs affected with injuries ſo indeed he is leſs obnoxious unto them. *Contention, which cometh of pride*, betrays a man into a thouſand inconveniences, which thoſe of a meek and lowly temper ſeldom meet with. True and genuine humility begetteth both

The pleaſure and ſweetneſs of an humble temper.

a veneration and love among all wiſe and diſcerning perſons; while pride defeateth its own deſign, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

But as the chief exerciſes of humility are thoſe which relate unto Almighty God; ſo theſe are accompanied with the greateſt ſatisfaction and ſweetneſs. It is impoſſible to expreſs the great pleaſure and delight which religious perſons feel in the loweſt proſtrations of their ſouls before God, when, having a deep ſenſe of the divine majeſty and glory, they ſink (if I may ſo ſpeak) to the bottom of their beings, and vaniſh and diſappear in the preſence of God, by a ſerious and affectionate acknowledgement of their own nothingneſs, and the ſhortneſs and imperfections of their attainments; when they underſtand the full ſenſe and emphaſis of the Pſalmiſt's exclamation, *Lord what is man?* and can utter it with the ſame affection. Never did any haughty and ambitious perſon receive the praiſes and applauſes of men with ſo much pleaſure, as the humble and religious do renounce them: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory*, &c.

Thus I have ſpoken ſomething of the excellencies and advantage of religion in its ſeveral branches; but ſhould be very injurious

injurious to the ſubject, did I pretend to have given any perfect account of it. Let us acquaint ourſelves with it, my dear friend, let us acquaint ourſelves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been ſpoke or written concerning it. But if we may ſuppoſe the ſoul to be already awakened unto ſome longing deſires after ſo great a bleſſedneſs, it will be good to give them vent and ſuffer them to iſſue forth in ſome ſuch aſpirations as theſe.

A PRAYER.

GOOD God! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called! How graciouſly haſt thou joined our duty and happineſs together; and preſcribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward! And ſhall ſuch ſilly worms be advanced to ſo great a height! Wilt thou allow us to raiſe our eyes to thee! Wilt thou admit and accept our affection! Shall we receive the impreſſion of thy divine excellencies, by beholding and admiring them, and partake of thy infinite bleſſedneſs and glory, by loving thee, and rejoicing in them! O the happineſs of thoſe ſouls that have broken the fetters of ſelf-love, and diſintangled their affections from every narrow and particular good; whoſe underſtandings

are enlightned by thy Holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine; who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy ſake! I am perſuaded, O God, I am perſuaded, that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my ſpirit be ſubdued, and till I come ſeriouſly to deſpiſe the world, and think nothing of myſelf. But O when ſhall it once be! O when wilt thou come unto me, and ſatisfy my ſoul with thy likeneſs, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of converſation? Haſt thou given me a proſpect of ſo great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? Haſt thou excited theſe deſires in my ſoul, and wilt thou not alſo ſatisfy them? O teach me to do thy will for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightneſs. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's ſake, and perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forſake not the works of thine own hands.

The deſpondent thoughts of ſome newly awaken'd to a right ſenſe of things.

I Have hitherto conſidered wherein true religion doth conſiſt, and how deſirable a thing it is. But when one ſees how infinitly diſtant

ſtant the common temper and frame of men is from it, he may perhaps be ready to deſpond, and give over, and think it utterly impoſſible to be attained. He may ſit down in ſadneſs, and bemoan himſelf, and ſay in the anguiſh and bitterneſs of his ſpirit, "They are happy indeed whoſe "ſouls are awakened unto the divine life, "who are thus renewed in the ſpirit of "their minds. But, alas! I am quite of "another conſtitution, and am not able to "effect ſo mighty a change. If outward "obſervances could have done the buſineſs, "I might have hoped to acquit myſelf by "diligence and care: but ſince nothing "but a new nature can ſerve the turn, "what am I able to do! I could beſtow "all my goods in oblations to God, or "alms to the poor; but cannot command "that love and charity, without which this "expence would profit me nothing. This "gift of God cannot be purchaſed with "money *. If a man ſhould give all the "ſubſtance of his houſe for love, it would "utterly be contemned †. I could pine "and macerate my body, and undergo "many hardſhips and troubles: but I can-"not get all my corruptions ſtarved, nor "my affections wholly weaned from earth-

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* Acts viii. 20. † Cant. viii. 7.

" ly things; there is ſtill ſome wordly de-
" ſires lurking in my heart; and thoſe
" vanities that I have ſhut out of the doors,
" are always getting in by the windows.
" I am many times convinced of my own
" meanneſs, of the weakneſs of my body,
" and the far greater weakneſs of my ſoul:
" but this doth rather beget indignation
" and diſcontent, than true humility in
" my ſpirit: and though I ſhould come to
" think meanly of myſelf, yet I cannot
" endure that others ſhould think ſo too.
" In a word, when I reflect on my higheſt
" and moſt ſpecious attainments, I have
" reaſon to ſuſpect, that they are all but
" the effects of nature, the iſſues of ſelf-
" love acting under ſeveral diſguiſes: and
" this principle is ſo powerful and ſo deep-
" ly rooted in me, that I can never hope
" to be delivered from the dominion of it.
" I may toſs and turn as a door upon the
" hinges; but can never get clear off, or
" be quite unhinged of *ſelf*, which is ſtill
" the center of all my motions. So that
" all the advantage I can draw from the
" diſcovery of religion, is but to ſee at a
" huge diſtance that felicity which I am
" not able to reach: like a man in a ſhip-
" wreck, who diſcerns the land, and en-
" vies the happineſs of thoſe who are there,

" but

"but thinks it impoſſible for himſelf to "get aſhore."

Theſe, I ſay, or ſuch like deſponding thoughts, may ariſe in the minds of thoſe perſons who begin to conceive ſomewhat more of the nature and excellency of religion than before. They have ſpied the land, and ſeen that it is exceeding good, that it floweth with milk and honey; but they find they have the children of *Anak* to grapple with, many powerful luſts and corruptions to overcome; and they fear they ſhall never prevail againſt them. But why ſhould we give way to ſuch diſcouraging ſuggeſtions? why ſhould we entertain ſuch unreaſonable fears, which damp our ſpirits and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way? Let us encourage ourſelves, my dear friend, let us encourage ourſelves with thoſe mighty aids we are to expect in this ſpiritual warfare; for greater is he that is for us than all that can riſe up againſt us: *The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlaſting arms* *. *Let us be ſtrong in the Lord, and the power of his might; for it is he that ſhall tread down our enemies.* God hath a tender regard unto the

The unreaſonableneſs of theſe fears.

* Deut. xxxiii. 27.

the ſouls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare. He hath condeſcended to our weakneſs, and declared with an oath, that he hath no pleaſure in our deſtruction. There is no ſuch thing as deſpite or envy lodged in the boſom of that ever bleſſed Being, whoſe name and nature is love. He created us at firſt in a happy condition; and now, when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid help upon one that is mighty to ſave* *, hath commited the care of our ſouls to no meaner perſon than the eternal Son of his love. It is he that is the Captain of our ſalvation; and what enemies can be too ſtrong for us, when we are fighting under his banner? Did not the Son of God come down from the boſom of his Father, and pitch his tabernacle amongſt the ſons of men, that he might recover and propogate the divine life, and reſtore the image of God in their ſouls? All the mighty works which he performed, all the ſad afflictions which he ſuſtained, had this for their ſcope and deſign; for this did he labour and toil, for this did he bleed and die: *He was with child, he was in pain, aud hath he brought forth nothing but wind? Hath he wrought no deliverance in the earth* †? *Shall*

* Pſal. lxxxix. 19. † Iſ. xxvi. 18.

Shall he not ſee of the travel of his ſoul *? Certainly it is impoſſible that this great contrivance of heaven ſhould prove abortive, that ſuch a mighty undertaking ſhould fail and miſcarry. It hath already been effectual for the ſalvation of many thouſands, who were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as we can ſuppoſe ourſelves to be; and our *High Prieſt continueth for ever, and is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him* †. He is tender and compaſſionate; he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations: *A bruiſed reed will he not break, and ſmoaking flax will he not quench, till he ſend forth judgement unto victory* ‡. He hath ſent out his Holy Spirit, whoſe ſweet, but powerful breathings are ſtill moving up and down in the world, to quicken and revive the ſouls of men, and awaken them unto the ſenſe and feeling of thoſe divine things for which they were made; and is ready to aſſiſt ſuch weak and languiſhing creatures as we are in our eſſays towards holineſs and felicity; when once it hath taken hold of a ſoul, and kindled in it the ſmalleſt ſpark of divine love, it will be ſure to preſerve and cheriſh, and bring it forth into

* Iſ. liii. 11. † Heb. vii. 24, 25. ‡ Mat. xii. 20.

into a flame, which many waters ſhall not quench, neither ſhall the floods be able to drown it *. Whenever this day begins to dawn, and the *day-ſtar to ariſe in the heart* †, it will eaſily diſpel the powers of darkneſs, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and ſelfiſh affections of men, flee away as faſt before it as the ſhades of night when the ſun cometh out of his chambers: for *the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day* ‡. *They ſhall go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, till every one of them appear before God in Zion* §.

Why ſhould we think it impoſſible, that true goodneſs and univerſal love ſhould ever come to ſway and prevail in our ſouls? Is not this their primitive ſtate and condition, their native and genuine conſtitution as they came firſt from the hands of their maker? Sin and corruption are but uſurpers; and though they have long kept the poſſeſſion, yet *from the beginning it was not ſo.* That inordinate ſelf-love which one would think were rooted in our very being, and interwoven with the conſtitution of our nature, is nevertheleſs

of

* Cant. viii. 7.
† 2 Pet. i. 19.
‡ Prov. iv. 18.
§ Pſal. lxxxiv. 7.

of foreign extraction, and had no place at all in the ſtate of integrity. We have ſtill ſo much reaſon left as to condemn it. Our underſtandings are eaſily convinced, that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than we do ourſelves, who is infinitely better than we; and our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not diſordered and put out of tune. And is not he who made our ſouls, able to rectify and mend them again. Shall we not be able, by his aſſiſtance, to vanquiſh and expel thoſe violent intruders, *and turn into flight the armies of the aliens* ?*

No ſooner ſhall we take up arms in this holy war, but we ſhall have all the ſaints on earth, and all the angels in heaven engaged on our party. The holy church throughout the world is daily interceeding with God for the ſucceſs of all ſuch endeavours. And doubtleſs thoſe heavenly hoſts above are nearly concerned in the intereſt of religion, and infinitely deſirous to ſee the divine life thriving and prevailing in this inferiour world; and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by themſelves in heaven. And

* Heb. xi. 34.

may we not encourage ourſelves, as the prophet did his ſervant, when he ſhewed him the horſes and chariots of fire, *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be againſt us* *.

We muſt do what we can, and depend on the divine aſſiſtance.

Away then with all perplexing fears and deſponding thoughts. To undertake vigorouſly, and rely confidently on the divine aſſiſtance, is more than half the conqueſt. *Let us ariſe, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us* †. It is true, religion in the ſouls of men is the immediate work of God; and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit thoſe ſupernatural aids by which it muſt be wrought: the HolyGhoſt muſt come upon us, and the power of the Higheſt muſt overſhadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Chriſt be formed in us. But yet we muſt not expect that this whole work ſhould be done without any concurring endeavours of our own: we muſt not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till omnipotence pull us from thence. No, no; we muſt beſtir ourſelves, and actuate thoſe powers which we have already received: we muſt put forth ourſelves to our outmoſt capacities,

NB

* 2 Kings vi. 16, 17. † 1 Chron. xxii, 16.

ties, and then we may hope that *our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord**. All the art and induſtry of man cannot form the ſmalleſt herb, or make a ſtalk of corn to grow in the field: it is the energy of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect; it is God *who cauſeth the graſs to grow, and herb for the ſervice of man* †: and yet no body will ſay, that the labours of the huſbandman are uſeleſs or unneceſſary. So likewiſe the human ſoul is immediately created by God; it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child: and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary means for the propagation of mankind. Though there muſt intervene a ſtroke of omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our ſouls, yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare ourſelves ‡. For we muſt break up our fallow ground, and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that ſo we may be more ready to receive the ſeeds of grace, and the dew of heaven. It is true, God hath been found of ſome who ſought him not; he hath caſt himſelf in their way, who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and ſtopt their courſe on a ſudden: for ſo was NB

* 1 Cor. xv. 53. † Pſal. civ. 14. ‡ Jer. iv. 3.

St. *Paul* converted in his journey to *Damascus*. But certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men. Though he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavours. It shall therefore be my next work, to shew what course we ought to take for attaining that blessed temper I have hitherto described. But here, if, in delivering my own thoughts, I shall chance to differ from what is or may be said by others in this matter, I would not be thought to contradict and oppose them, more than physicians do when they prescribe several remedies for the same disease; which perhaps are all useful and good. Every one may propose the method he judges most proper and convenient; but he doth not thereby pretend that the cure can never be effected, unless that be exactly observed. I doubt it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons, that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls, as they have seen described in books: that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps

perhaps have felt them in themſelves) have too peremptorily preſcribed unto others. God hath ſeveral ways of dealing with the ſouls of men; and it ſufficeth if the work be accompliſhed, whatever the methods have been.

Again, Though, in propoſing directions, I muſt follow that order which the nature of things ſhall lead to; yet I do not mean that the ſame method ſhould be ſo punctually obſerved in the practice, as if the latter rules were never to be heeded, till ſome conſiderable time hath been ſpent in practiſing the former. The directions I intend are mutually conducive to one another, and are all to be performed as occaſion ſhall ſerve, and we find ourſelves enabled to perform them.

But now, that I may detain you no longer, if we deſire to have our ſouls moulded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Chriſt formed in our hearts, we muſt ſeriouſly reſolve, and endeavour to avoid and abandon all vitious and ſinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till once we lay down theſe weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight againſt heaven: nor can we expect to have our diſtempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poiſon. Every wilful ſin gives a

We muſt ſhun all manner of ſin.

mortal wound to the ſoul, and puts it at a greater diſtance from God and goodneſs: and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, unleſs we cleanſe our hands from vitious actions. Now in this caſe we cannot excuſe ourſelves by the pretence of impoſſibility; for ſure our outward man is ſome way in our power; we have ſome command of our feet, and hands, and tongue, nay and of our thoughts and fancies too; at leaſt ſo far as to divert them from impure and ſinful objects, and to turn our mind another way: and we ſhould find this power and authority much ſtrengthened and advanced, if we were careful to manage and exerciſe it. In the mean while, I acknowledge our corruptions are ſo ſtrong, and our temptations ſo many, that it will require a great deal of ſtedfaſtneſs and reſolution, of watchfulneſs and care, to preſerve ourſelves, even in this degree of innocence and purity.

We muſt know what things are ſinful.

And, firſt, Let us inform ourſelves well, what thoſe ſins are from which we ought to abſtain. And here we muſt not take meaſures from the maxims of the world, or the practices of thoſe whom in charity we account good men. Moſt people have very

very light apprehenſions of thoſe things, and are not ſenſible of any fault, unleſs it be groſs and flagitious; and ſcarce reckon any ſo great as that which they call preciſeneſs: and thoſe who are more ſerious, do many times allow themſelves too great latitude and freedom. Alas! how much pride and vanity, and paſſion and humour, how much weakneſs, and ſin, doth every day ſhow itſelf in their converſe and behaviour? It may be they are humbled for it, and ſtriving againſt it, and are daily gaining ſome ground; but then the progreſs is ſo ſmall, and their failings ſo many, that we had need to chuſe an exacter pattern. Every one of us muſt anſwer for himſelf, and the practices of others will never warrant and ſecure us. It is the higheſt folly to regultate our actions by any other ſtandard than that by which they muſt be judged. If ever we would *cleanſe our way*, it muſt be *by taking heed thereto according to the word of God* *. And that *word which is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* †, will certainly diſcover many

* Pſalm. cxix. 9. † Heb. iv, 12.

many things to be ſinful and heinous which paſs for very innocent in the eyes of the world. Let us therefore imitate the pſalmiſt, who ſaith, *concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips, I have kept myſelf from the paths of the deſtroyer* *. Let us acquaint ourſelves well with the ſtrict and holy laws of our religion. Let us conſider the diſcourſes of our bleſſed Saviour, (eſpecially that divine ſermon on the mount), and the writings of his holy apoſtles; where an ingenuous and unbiaſſed mind may clearly diſcern thoſe limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined. And then let us never look upon any ſin as light and inconſiderable; but be fully perſuaded, that the ſmalleſt is infinitely heinous in the ſight of God, and prejudicial to the ſouls of men; and that if we had the right ſenſe of things, we ſhould be as deeply affected with the leaſt irregularites, as now we are with the greateſt crimes.

We muſt reſiſt the temptations to ſin, by conſidering the evils they will draw on us.

But now, amongſt thoſe things which we diſcover to be ſinful, there will be ſome unto which, through the diſpoſition of our nature, or long cuſtom, or the endearments of

* Pſal. xvii 4.

of pleaſure, we are ſo much wedded that it will be like cutting off the right-hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But muſt we therefore ſit down, and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poet, who ſtood the whole day at the river-ſide, till all the water ſhould run by. We muſt not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go. We muſt not continue our ſinful practices, in hopes that the divine grace will one day overpower our ſpirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

Let us ſuppoſe the worſt, that we are utterly deſtitute of any ſupernatural principle, and want that taſte by which we ſhould diſcern and abhor perverſe things; yet ſure we are capable of ſome conſiderations which may be of force to perſuade us to this reformation of our lives. If the inward deformity and heinous nature of ſin cannot affect us, at leaſt we may be frighted by thoſe dreadful conſequences that attend it. The ſame ſelfiſh principle which puſheth us forward unto the purſuit of ſinful pleaſures, will make us loath to buy them at the rate of everlaſting miſery.

ſery. Thus we may encounter ſelf-love with its own weapons, and employ one natural inclination for repreſſing the exorbitancies of another. Let us therefore accuſtom ourſelves to conſider ſeriouſly what a fearful thing it muſt needs be, to irritate and offend that infinite Being on whom we hang and depend every moment; who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make us miſerable, or his aſſiſtance to make us nothing. Let us frequently remember the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our lives; and how that, after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and converſed a little longer amongſt men, we muſt all go down unto the dark and ſilent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguiſh and regrate for all our ſinful enjoyments: and then think what horror muſt needs ſeize the guilty ſoul, to find itſelf naked and all alone before the ſevere and impartial judge of the world, to render an exact account not only of its more important and conſiderable tranſactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and ſwifteſt and moſt ſecret thought that ever paſſed through the mind. Let us ſometimes repreſent unto ourſelves the terror of that dreadful day, when the foundation of the

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earth ſhall be ſhaken, and the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat *, and the preſent frame of nature be diſſolved, and our eyes ſhall ſee the bleſſed Jeſus, (who came once into the world in all humility to viſit us, to purchaſe pardon for us, and beſeech us to accept of it), now appearing in the majeſty of his glory, and deſcending from heaven in a flaming fire, to take vengeance on thoſe that have deſpiſed his mercy, and perſiſted in rebellion againſt him; when all the hidden things of darkneſs ſhall be brought to light, and the counſels of the heart ſhall be made manifeſt †; when thoſe ſecret impurities and ſubtile frauds whereof the world did never ſuſpect us, ſhall be expoſed and laid open to publick view, and many thouſand actions which we never dreamed to be ſinful, or elſe had altogether forgotten, ſhall be charged home upon our conſciences with ſuch evident convictions of guilt, that we ſhall be neither able to deny nor excuſe them. Then ſhall all the angels in heaven and all the ſaints that ever lived on the earth, approve that dreadful ſentence which ſhall be paſſed on wicked men, and thoſe who perhaps did love and eſteem

* 2 Pet. iii. 10. † 1 Cor. iv. 5.

eſteem them when they lived in the world, ſhall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one requeſt for their deliverance. Let us conſider the eternal puniſhmets of the damned ſouls; which are ſhadowed forth in ſcriture by metaphors taken from thoſe things that are moſt terrible and grievous in the world, and yet all do not ſuffice to convey unto our minds any full apprehenſions of them. When we have joined all together the importance of all theſe expreſſions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of miſery and torment, we muſt ſtill remember, that all this comes infinitely ſhort of the truth and reality of the thing.

It is true, this is a ſad and melancholy ſubject; there is anguiſh and horror in the conſideration of it: but ſure it muſt be infinitely more dreadful to endure it; and ſuch thoughts as theſe may be very uſeful to fright us from the courſes that would lead us thither. How fond ſoever we may be of ſinful pleaſures, the fear of hell would make us abſtain. Our moſt forward inclinations will ſtartle and give back, when preſſed with that queſtion in the

prophet,

prophet, *Who amongſt us can dwell with everlaſting burnings* *?

To this very purpoſe it is that the terrors of another world are ſo frequently repreſented in holy writ, and that in ſuch terms as are moſt proper to affect and influence a carnal mind. Theſe fears can never ſuffice to make any perſon truly good: but certainly they may reſtrain us from much evil, and have often made way for more ingenuous and kindly impreſſions.

We muſt keep a conſtant watch over ourſelves.

But it will not ſuffice to conſider theſe things once and again, nor to form ſome reſolutions of abandoning our ſins, unleſs we maintain a conſtant guard, and be continually watching againſt them. Sometimes the mind is awakened to ſee the diſmal conſequences of a vitious life; and ſtraight we are reſolved to reform: but, alas! it preſently falleth aſleep, and we loſe that proſpect which we had of things; and then temptations take the advantage; they ſollicit and importune us continually, and ſo do frequently engage our conſent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruin of moſt people, to live at adventure, and take part in every thing that comes in their way; ſeldom conſidering what they

* Iſa. xxxiii. 14.

are about to ſay or do. If we would have our reſolutions take effect, we muſt take heed unto our ways, and ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and examine the motions that ariſe in our hearts, and cauſe them to tell us whence they come and whither they go; whether it be pride or paſſion, or any corrupt and vitious humuor that prompteth us to any deſign, and whether God will be offended, or any body harmed by it. And if we have no time for long reaſonings, let us at leaſt turn our eyes towards God, and place ourſelves in his preſence, to aſk his leave and approbation for what we do; let us conſider ourſelves under the all-ſeeing eye of that divine Majeſty, as in the midſt of an infinite globe of light which compaſſeth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermoſt corners of our ſoul. The ſenſe and remembrance of the divine preſence, is the moſt ready and effectual means, both to diſcover what is unlawful and to reſtrain us from it. There are ſome things a perſon could make ſhift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look almighty God in the face and adventure upon them. If we look unto him, we ſhall be lightened: if we *ſet him always before us*, he will *guide us by his eye*

eye, and inſtruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk.

This care and watchfulneſs over our actions muſt be ſeconded by frequent and ſerious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our ſins, by a humble and ſorrowful acknowlegment of them; but alſo that we may reinforce and ſtrengthen our reſolutions, and learn to decline or reſiſt the temptations by which we have been formerly foiled. It is an advice worthy of a chriſtian, though it did firſt drop from a heathen pen, that before we betake ourſelves to reſt, we review and examine all the paſſages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redreſs what we find to have been amiſs, and make the ſhipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our courſe in another. This may be called the very art of virtuous living, and would contribute wonderfully to advance our reformation and preſerve our innocency. But withal we muſt not forget to implore the divine aſſiſtance, eſpecially againſt thoſe ſins that do moſt eaſily beſet us. And though it be ſuppoſed that our hearts are not yet moulded into that ſpiritual

We muſt often examine our actions.

frame which ſhould render our devotions acceptable; yet methinks ſuch conſiderations as have been propoſed to deter us from ſin, may alſo ſtir us up to ſome natural ſeriouſneſs, and make our prayers againſt it as earneſt, at leaſt, as they are wont to be againſt other calamities. And I doubt not but God, who heareth the cry of the ravens, will have ſome regard even to ſuch petitions as proceed from thoſe natural paſſions which himſelf hath implanted in us. Beſides that thoſe prayers againſt ſin, will be powerful engagements on ourſelves to excite us to watchfulneſs and care: and common ingenuity will make us aſhamed to relapſe into thoſe faults which we have lately bewailed before God, and againſt which we have begged his aſſiſtance.

NB

\# Thus we are to make the firſt eſſay for recovering the divine life, by reſtraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into ſinful practices. But now I muſt add, that chriſtian prudence will teach us to abſtain from gratifications that are not ſimply unlawful; and that, not only that we may ſecure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard if we ſhould ſtrain our liberty to the utmoſt

It is fit to reſtrain ourſelves in many lawful things.

utmoſt point; but alſo that hereby we may weaken the forces of nature, and teach our appetites to obey. We muſt do with ourſelves, as prudent parents with their children; who croſs their wills in many little indifferent things to make them manageable and ſubmiſſive in more conſiderable inſtances. He who would mortify the pride and vanity of his ſpirit, ſhould ſtop his ears to the moſt deſerved praiſes, and ſometimes forbear his juſt vindication from the cenſures and aſperſions of others; eſpecially if they reflect only upon his prudence and conduct, and not upon his virtue and innocence. He who would check a revengeful humour, would do well to deny himſelf the ſatisfaction of repreſenting unto others the injuries which he hath ſuſtained. And if we would ſo take heed to our ways, that we ſin not with our tongue, we muſt accuſtom ourſelves much to ſolitude and ſilence; and ſometines, with the Pſalmiſt, *hold our peace even from good*, till once we have gotten ſome command over that unruly member. Thus, I ſay, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accuſtoming them to frequent refuſals.

But it is not enough to have them under violence and reſtraint.

We muſt ſtrive to put ourſelves out of love with the world.

Our next eſſay muſt be to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which ſink and depreſs the ſouls of men, and retard their motions towards God and heaven. And this we muſt do by poſſeſſing our minds with a deep perſuaſion of the vanity and emptineſs of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and every body can make declamations upon it. But alas! how few underſtand and believe what they ſay? Theſe notions float in our brain, and come ſliding off our tongues; but we have no deep impreſſion of them on our ſpirits; we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell that all the glory and ſplendor, all the pleaſures and enjoyments of the world, are vanity and nothing; and yet theſe nothings take up all our thoughts, and ingroſs all our affections: they ſtifle the better inclinations of our ſoul, and inveigle us into many a ſin. It may be, in a ſober mood, we give them the ſlight, and reſolve to be no longer deluded with them; but theſe thoughts ſeldom outlive the next temptation; the vanities

vanities which we have ſhut out at the door, get in at a poſtern. There are ſtill ſome pretenſions, ſome hopes that flatter us; and, after we have been fruſtrated a thouſand times, we muſt continually be repeating the experiment. The leaſt difference of circumſtances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that ſatisfaction in one thing, which we have miſſed in another. But could we once get clearly off, and come to a real and ſerious contempt of worldly things, this were a very conſiderable advancement in our way. The ſoul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and unextinguiſhable thirſt; an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at ſome object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the world, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the ſun, it would quickly ſearch after ſome higher and more excellent object, to ſatisfy its ardent and importunate cravings; and, being no longer dazzled with glittering vanities, would fix on that ſupreme and all-ſufficient good, where it would diſcover ſuch beauty and ſweetneſs, as would charm and overpower all its affections. The love of the world, and the love of God, are like the ſcales of

a balance; as the one falleth, the other doth riſe. When our natural inclinations proſper, and the creature is exalted in our ſoul, religion is faint, and doth languiſh: but when earthly objects wither away, and loſe their beauty, and the ſoul begins to cool and flag in its proſecution of them, then the ſeeds of grace take root, and the divine life begins to flouriſh and prevail. It doth therefore nearly concern us, to convince ourſelves of the emptineſs and vanity of creature-enjoyments, and reaſon our heart out of love with them. Let us ſeriouſly conſider all that our reaſon, our faith, our own experience, or the obſervation of others, can ſuggeſt to this effect; let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really perſuaded of it. Amidſt all our purſuits and deſigns, let us ſtop, and aſk ourſelves, For what end is all this? At what do I aim? Can the groſs and muddy pleaſures of ſenſe, or a heap of white and yellow earth, or the eſteem or affection of ſilly creatures like myſelf, ſatisfy a rational and immortal ſoul? have I not tried theſe things already; Will they have a higher reliſh, and yield me more contentment to-morrow than yeſterday, or the next year than they did the laſt?

There

There may be ſome little difference betwixt that which I am now purſuing, and that which I enjoyed before: but ſure my former enjoyments did ſhew as pleaſant, and promiſe as fair before I attained them. Like the rainbow, they looked very glorious at a diſtance; but when I approached I found nothing but emptineſs and vapour. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

I cannot inſiſt on this ſubject; and there is the leſs need, when I remember to whom I am writing. Yes, my dear friend, you have had as great experience of the emptineſs and vanity of human things, and have at preſent as few worldly engagements as any that I know. I have ſometimes reflected on thoſe paſſages of your life wherewith you have been pleaſed to acquaint me: and methinks, through all, I can diſcern a deſign of the divine providence to wean your affections from every thing here below. The trials you have had of thoſe things which the world doats upon, have taught you to deſpiſe them: and you have found, by experience, that neither the endowments of nature, nor the advantages of fortune, are ſufficient for happineſs; that every roſe hath its thorn, and there may

may be a worm at the root of the faireſt gourd; ſome ſecret and undiſcerned grief which may make a perſon deſerve the pity of thoſe who perhaps do admire or envy their ſuppoſed felicity. If any earthly comforts have got too much of your heart, I think they have been your relations and friends: and the deareſt of thoſe are removed out of the world: ſo that you muſt raiſe your mind towards heaven, when you would think upon them. Thus God hath provided, that your heart may be looſed from the world; and that he may not have any rival in your affection, which I have always obſerved to be ſo large and unbounded, ſo noble and diſintereſted, that no inferior object can anſwer or deſerve it.

We muſt do thoſe outward actions that are commanded.

When we have got our corruptions reſtrained and our natural appetites and inclinations towards worldly things in ſome meaſure ſubdued, we muſt proceed to ſuch exerciſes as have a more immediate tendency to excite and awaken the divine life. And, firſt, let us endeavour conſcientiouſly to perform thoſe duties which religion doth require, and whereunto it would incline us if it did prevail in our ſouls. If we cannot get our inward diſpoſition

diſpoſition preſently changed, let us ſtudy at leaſt to regulate our outward deportment. If our hearts be not yet inflamed with divine love, let us however own our allegiance to that infinite Majeſty, by attending his ſervice, and liſtening to his word; by ſpeaking reverently of his name, and praiſing his goodneſs; and exhorting others to ſerve and obey him. If we want that charity, and thoſe bowels of compaſſion which we ought to have towards our neighbours, yet muſt we not omit any occaſion of doing them good. If our hearts be haughty and proud, we muſt nevertheleſs ſtudy a modeſt and humble deportment. Theſe external performances are of little value in themſelves, yet may they help us forward to better things. The apoſtle indeed telleth us, that *bodily exerciſe profiteth little;* but he ſeems not to affirm that it is altogether uſeleſs. It is always good to do what we can; for then God is wont to pity our weakneſs, and aſſiſt our feeble endeavours: and when true charity and humility, and other graces of the divine ſpirit, come to take root in our ſouls, they will exert themſelves more freely, and with leſs difficulty, if we have before been accuſtomed to expreſs them in our outward converſations. Nor need we

we fear the imputation of hypocriſy, though our actions do thus ſomewhat outrun our affections; ſeeing they do ſtill proceed from a ſenſe of our duty; and our deſign is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become ſo.

We muſt endeavour to form internal acts of devotion, charity, &c.

But as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the ſoul, to mould it to a right temper and frame; ſo ought we to be moſt frequent and ſedulous in the exerciſe of them. Let us be often lifting up our hearts towards God; and if we do not ſay that we love him above all things, let us at leaſt acknowledge that it is our duty, and would be our happineſs ſo to do. Let us lament the diſhonour done unto him by fooliſh and ſinful men, and applaud the praiſes and adorations that are given him by that bleſſed and glorious company above. Let us reſign and yield ourſelves up unto him a thouſand times to be governed by his laws, and diſpoſed of at his pleaſure. And though our ſtubborn hearts ſhould ſtart back, and refuſe; yet let us tell him we are convinced that his will is always juſt and good; and therefore deſire him to do with us whatſoever he pleaſeth, whether we will or not.

And

And ſo, for begetting in us an univerſal charity towards men, we muſt be frequently putting up wiſhes for their happineſs, and bleſſing every perſon that we ſee; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miſerable, we may ſecond it with earneſt deſires that God would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their diſtreſſes.

Thus ſhould we exerciſe ourſelves unto godlineſs. And when we are employing the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to ſtrike in, and elevate theſe acts of our ſoul beyond the pitch of nature, and give them a divine impreſſion; and, after the frequent reiteration of theſe, we ſhall find ourſelves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and eaſe.

I ſhall mention but two other means for begetting that holy and divine temper of ſpirit which is the ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe. And the firſt is, a deep and ſerious conſideration of the truths of our religion and that both as to the certainty, and importance of them. The aſſent which is ordinarly given to divine truths, is very faint and languid, very weak and ineffectual; flowing only from a blind

Conſideration, a great inſtrument of religion.

inclination to follow that religon which is in faſhion, or a lazy indifferency and unconcernedneſs whether things be ſo or not. Men are unwilling to quarrel with the religion of their country; and ſince all their neighbours are chriſtians, they are content to be ſo too: but they are ſeldom at the pains to conſider the evidences of thoſe truths, or to ponder the importance and tendency of them: and thence it is that they have ſo little influence on their affections and practice. Thoſe *ſpiritleſs and paralytick thoughts* (as one doth rightly term them) are not able to move the will, and direct the hand. We muſt therefore endeavour to work up our minds to a ſerious belief and full perſuaſion of divine truths, unto a ſenſe and feeling of ſpiritual things. Our thoughts muſt dwell upon them, till we be both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them. Let us urge forward our ſpirits, and make them approach the inviſible world; and fix our minds upon immaterial things, till we clearly perceive that theſe are no dreams, nay that all things are dreams and ſhadows beſides them. When we look about us, and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole creation; let

our

our thoughts from thence take their flight towards that omnipotent wiſdom and goodneſs which did at firſt produce, and doth ſtill eſtabliſh and uphold the ſame. When we reflect upon ourſelves, let us conſider that we are not a mere piece of organized matter, a curious and well-contrived engine; that there is more in us than fleſh, and blood, and bones; even a divine ſpark, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our maker: and though it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpiſh companion; yet ere long it ſhall be delivered, and can ſubſiſt without the body, as well as that can do without the cloaths, which we throw off at our pleaſure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this ſcene of miſery, and folly, and ſin; and raiſe them towards that more vaſt and glorious world, whoſe innocent and bleſſed inhabitants ſolace themſelves eternally in the divine preſence, and know no other paſſion, but an unmixed joy, and an unbounded love: and then conſider how the bleſſed ſon of God came down to this lower world, to live among us and die for us, that he might bring us to a portion of the ſame felicity: and think how he hath overcome the ſharpneſs of death, and opened the king-

dom of heaven to all believers, and is now ſet down on the *right hand of the Majeſty on high* *; and yet is not the leſs mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and preſenteth them unto his Father; and is daily viſiting his church with the influences of his Spirit, as the ſun reacheth us with his beams.

To beget divine love, we muſt conſider the excellency of the divine nature.

The ſerious and frequent conſideration of theſe, and ſuch divine truths, is the moſt proper method to beget that lively faith which is the foundation of religion, the ſpring and root of the divine life. Let me further ſuggeſt ſome particular ſubjects of meditation for producing the ſeveral branches of it. And, firſt, to inflame our ſouls with the love of God, let us conſider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindneſs towards us. It is little we know of the divine perfections: and yet that little may ſuffice to fill our ſouls with admiration and love, to raviſh our affections, as well as to raiſe our wonder. For we are not merely creatures of ſenſe, that we ſhould be incapable of any other affection but that which entereth by the eyes. The character of any excellent perſon whom we

* Heb. i. 3.

we have never ſeen, will many times engage our hearts, and make us hugely concerned in all his intereſts. And what is it, I pray you, that engages us ſo much to thoſe with whom we converſe? I cannot think that it is merely the colour of their face, or their comely proportions; for then we ſhould fall in love with ſtatues, and pictures, and flowers. Theſe outward accompliſhments may a little delight the eye, but would never be able to prevail ſo much on the heart, if they did not repreſent ſome vital perfection. We either ſee or apprehend ſome greatneſs of mind, or vigour of ſpirit, or ſweetneſs of diſpoſition; ſome ſprightlineſs, or wiſdom, or goodneſs, which charm our ſpirit, and command our love. Now theſe perfections are not obvious to the ſight; the eyes can only diſcern the ſigns and effect of them: and if it be the underſtanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we cannot but diſcover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our hearts, if we did ſeriouſly view and regard them. Shall we not be infinitely more tranſported with that almighty wiſdom and goodneſs which fills the univerſe, and

diſplays itſelf in all parts of the creation, which eſtabliſheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of providence, and keepeth the world from diſorder and ruin, than with the faint rays of the ſame perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we dote on the ſcattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable ſtupidity and blindneſs. Whatever we find lovely in a friend, or in a ſaint ought not to engroſs, but to elevate our affection. We ſhould conclude only with ourſelves, that if there be ſo much ſweetneſs in a drop, there muſt be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be ſo much ſplendor in a ray, what muſt the ſun be in its glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteneſs of the object, as if God were at too great a diſtance for our converſe or our love: *He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being**. We cannot open our eyes, but we muſt behold ſome footſteps of his glory; and cannot turn them towards him, but we ſhall be ſure to find his intent upon us; waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to

* Acts xvii. 27.

to entertain the moſt intimate fellowſhip and communion with us. Let us therefore endeavour to raiſe our minds to the cleareſt conceptions of the divine nature. Let us conſider all that his works do declare, or his word doth diſcover of him unto us. And let us eſpecially contemplate that viſible repreſentation of him which was made in our own nature by his Son, who was *the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* *; and who appeared in the world to diſcover at once what God is, and what we ought to be. Let us repreſent him unto our minds as we find him deſcribed in the goſpel; and there we ſhall behold the perfections of the divine nature, though covered with the vail of human infirmities: and, when we have framed unto ourſelves the cleareſt notion that we can, of a Being infinite in power, in wiſdom, and goodneſs, the author and fountain of all perfections, let us fix the eyes of our ſouls upon it, that our eyes may affect our heart †; and while we are muſing, the fire will burn ‡.

Eſpecially,

* Heb. i. 3. † Lam. iii. 51. ‡ Pſalm. xxxix. 3.

Especially, if hereunto we add the consideration of God's favour and good-will towards us. Nothing is more powerful to engage our affection, than to find that we are beloved. Expressions of kindness are always pleasing and acceptable unto us, though the person should be otherwise mean and contemptible. But to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of heaven hath any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us! how must it overcome our spirits, and melt our hearts, and put our whole soul into a flame! Now, as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love towards man, so all his works do loudly proclaim it. He gave us our being, and by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well-furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities: he raineth down blessings from heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision; he giveth us our food and raiment; and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweeteneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every faculty with suitable

We should meditate on his goodness and love.

ſuitable objects. The eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our ſafety when we are faſt aſleep, neither minding him nor ourſelves. But, leſt we ſhould think theſe teſtimonies of his kindneſs leſs conſiderable, becauſe they are the eaſy iſſues of his omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himſelf to us; he hath teſtified his affection to us by ſuffering, as well as by doing; and, becauſe he could not ſuffer in his own nature, he aſſumed ours. The eternal ſon of God did clothe himſelf with the infirmities of our fleſh, and left the company of thoſe innocent and bleſſed ſpirits, who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wreſtle with the obſtinacy of that rebellious race, to reduce them to their allegiance and felicity, and then to offer himſelf up as a ſacrifice and propitiation for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to expreſs the paſſion wherewith he found himſelf overcome, after a long reſiſtance: that the god of love had ſhot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himſelf into the bow, and darted himſelf ſtreight into his breaſt.

Methinks

Methinks, this doth ſome way adumbrate God's method of dealings with men. He had long contended with a ſtubborn world, and thrown down many a bleſſing upon them; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at laſt made a gift of himſelf, to teſtify his affection, and engage theirs. The account which we have of our Saviour's life in the goſpel, doth all along preſent us with the hiſtory of his love; all the pains that he took, and the trouble that he endured, were the wonderful effects, and uncontroulable evidences of it. But O that laſt, that diſmal ſcene! Is it poſſible to remember it, and queſtion his kindneſs, or deny him ours? Here, here it is (my dear friend) that we ſhould fix our moſt ſerious and ſolemn thoughts; *That Chriſt may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulneſs of God* *.

We ought alſo frequently to reflect on thoſe particular tokens of favour and love which God hath beſtowed on ourſelves; how long he hath borne with our follies and

* Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.

and ſins, and waited to be gracious unto us; wreſtling as it were, with the ſtubborneſs of our hearts, and eſſaying every method to reclaim us. We ſhould keep a regiſter in our minds of all the eminent bleſſings and deliverances we have met with; ſome whereof have been ſo conveyed, that we might clearly perceive they were not the iſſues of chance, but the gracious effects of the divine favour, and the ſignal returns of our prayers. Nor ought we to imbitter the thoughts of theſe things with any harſh or unworthy ſuſpicion, as if they were deſigned on purpoſe to enhance our guilt, and heighten our eternal damnation. No, no, my friend; God is love, and he hath no pleaſure in the ruin of his creatures. If they abuſe his goodneſs, and turn his grace into wantonneſs, and thereby plunge themſelves into the greater depth of guilt and miſery, this is the effect of their obſtinate wickedneſs, and not the deſign of thoſe beneſits which he beſtows.

If theſe conſiderations had once begotten in our hearts a real love and affection towards almighty God, that would eaſily lead us unto the other branches of religion; and therefore I ſhall need ſay the leſs of them.

We

We ſhall find our hearts enlarged in charity towards men, by conſidering the relation wherein they ſtand unto God, and the impreſſes of his image which are ſtamped upon them. They are not only his creatures, the workmanſhip of his hands, but ſuch of whom he taketh ſpecial care, and for whom he hath a very dear and tender regard; having laid the deſigns of their happineſs before the foundation of the world, and being willing to live and converſe with them to all the ages of eternity. The meaneſt and moſt contemptible perſon whom we behold, is the offspring of heaven, one of the children of the Moſt High: and however unworthy he might behave himſelf of that relation, ſo long as God hath not abdicated and diſowned him by a final ſentence, he will have us to acknowledge him as one of his, and as ſuch to embrace him with a ſincere and cordial affection. You know what a great concernment we are wont to have for thoſe that do any ways belong to the perſon whom we love; how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity to gratify the child or the ſervant of a friend; and ſure our love towards God would as naturally ſpring forth in charity towards

To beget charity, we muſt remember that all men are nearly related unto God.

towards men, did we mind the intereſt that he is pleaſed to take in them, and conſider, that every ſoul is dearer unto him than all the material world, and that he did not account the blood of his ſon too great a price for their redemption.

Again, as all men ſtand in a near relation to God; ſo they have ſtill ſo much of his image ſtamped on them, as may oblige and excite us to love them. In ſome this image is more eminent and conſpicuous, and we can diſcern the lovely tracts of wiſdom and goodneſs: and though in others it be miſerably ſullied and defaced, yet is it not altogether razed; ſome lineaments at leaſt do ſtill remain. All men are endued with rational and immortal ſouls, with underſtandings and wills capable of the higheſt and moſt excellent things: and if they be at preſent diſordered and put out of tune by wickedneſs and folly, this may indeed move our paſſion, but ought not in reaſon to extinguiſh our love. When we ſee a perſon of a rugged humour, and perverſe diſpoſition, full of malice and diſſimulation, very fooliſh and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that preſents itſelf unto us under an idea ſo little grateful and lovely. But when we ſhall

That they carry his image upon them.

conſider theſe evil qualities as the diſeaſes and diſtempers of a ſoul, which in itſelf is capable of all that wiſdom and goodneſs wherewith the beſt of ſaints have ever been adorned, and which may one day come to be raiſed to ſuch heights of perfection, as ſhall render it a fit companion for the holy angels; this will turn our averſion into pity, and make us behold him with ſuch reſentments, as we ſhould have when we did look upon a beautiful body that were mangled with wounds, or diſfigured by ſome lothſome diſeaſe; and, however we hate the vices, we ſhall not ceaſe to love the man.

To beget purity we ſhould conſider the dignity of our nature.

In the next place, for purifying our ſouls, and diſintangling our affections from the pleaſures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a ſhameful and unworthy thing it is for ſo noble and divine a creature as the ſoul of man, to be ſunk and immerſed in brutiſh and ſenſual luſts, or amuſed with airy and fantaſtical delights, and ſo to loſe the reliſh of ſolid and ſpiritual pleaſures; that the beaſt ſhould be fed and pampered, and the man and the chriſtian be ſtarved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made,

made, this would teach us in a right ſenſe to reverence and ſtand in awe of ourſelves; it would beget a holy modeſty and ſhamefacedneſs, and make us very ſhy and reſerved in the uſe of the moſt innocent and allowable pleaſures.

It will be very effectual to the ſame purpoſe, that we frequently raiſe our minds towards heaven, and repreſent to our thoughts the joys that are at God's right-hand, *thoſe pleaſures that endure for evermore*; for *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure**. If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us, as *ſtrangers and pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul*; and keep ourſelves *unſpotted from this world*, that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we muſt ſee, that our notions of heaven be not groſs and carnal, that we dream not of a *Mahometan* paradiſe, nor reſt on thoſe metaphors and ſimilitudes by which theſe joys are ſometimes repreſented. For this might perhaps have a quite contrary effect: it might entangle us further in carnal affections, and we ſhould be ready to indulge ourſelves in a very

We ſhould meditate oft on the joys of heaven.

* 1. John iii. 3.

very liberal foretaſte of thoſe pleaſures, wherein we had placed our everlaſting felicity. But when we come once to conceive aright of thoſe pure and ſpiritual pleaſures; when the happineſs we propoſe to ourſelves, is from the ſight, and love and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and forethoughts of that bleſſed eſtate, O how mean and contemptible will all things here below appear in our eyes! With what diſdain ſhall we reject the groſs and muddy pleaſures that would deprive us of thoſe celeſtial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indiſpoſe us for them!

Humility ariſes from the conſideration of our failings.

The laſt branch of religion is humility: and ſure we can never want matter of conſideration for begetting it. All our wickednesſes and imperfections, all our follies and our ſins, may help to pull down that fond and overweening conceit which we are apt to entertain of ourſelves. That which makes any body eſteem us, is their knowledge or apprehenſion of ſome little good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us: were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that paſs in our heart in the beſt and

and moſt ſerious day of our life, being expoſed unto publick view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous. And now, however we conceal our failings from one another, yet ſure we are conſcious of them ourſelves; and ſome ſerious reflexion upon them, would much qualify and allay the vanity of our ſpirits. Thus holy men have come really to think worſe of themſelves, than of any other perſon in the world: not but that they know that groſs and ſcandalous vices are in their nature more heinous than the ſurpriſals of temptations and infirmity; but becauſe they were much more intent on their own miſcarriages, than on thoſe of their neighbours; and did conſider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might be ſuppoſed to diminiſh and alleviate the other.

But it is well obſerved by a pious writer, that the deepeſt and moſt pure humility doth not ſo much ariſe from the conſideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine purity and goodneſs. Our ſpots never appear ſo clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never ſeem leſs in our own eyes, than when we look down

Thoughts of God give us the loweſt thoughts of ourſelves.

down upon ourſelves from on high. O how little, how nothing do all thoſe ſhadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value ourſelves! That humility which cometh from a view of our own ſinfulneſs and miſery, is more turbulent and boiſterous: but the other layeth us full as low; and wanteth nothing but that anguiſh and vexation wherewith our ſouls are apt to boil when they are the neareſt object of our thoughts.

Prayer another inſtrument of religion.

There remains yet another means for begetting an holy and religious diſpoſition in the ſoul; and that is, fervent and hearty prayer. Holineſs is the gift of God: indeed the greateſt gift he doth beſtow, or we are capable to receive; and he hath promiſed the Holy Spirit to thoſe that aſk it of him. In prayer we make the neareſt approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of heaven. Then it is that the ſun of righteouſneſs doth viſit us with his directeſt rays and diſſipateth our darkneſs, and imprinteth his image on our ſouls. I cannot now inſiſt on the advantages of this exerciſe, or the diſpoſitions wherewith it ought to be performed; and there is no need I ſhould, there being ſo many books that

that treat on this ſubject. I ſhall only tell you, that as there is one ſort of prayer wherein we make uſe of the voice, which is neceſſary in publick, and may ſometimes have its own advantages in private; and another, wherein though we utter no ſound, yet we conceive the expreſſions and form the words, as it were, in our minds: ſo there is a third and more ſublime kind of prayer, wherein the ſoul takes a higher flight, and, having collected all its forces by long and ſerious meditation, it darteth itſelf (if I may ſo ſpeak) towards God in ſighs and groans, and thoughts too big for expreſſion: as when, after a deep contemplation of the divine perfections appearing in all his works of wonder, it addreſſeth itſelf unto him in the profoundeſt adoration of his majeſty and glory; or when, after ſad reflections on its vileneſs and miſcarriages, it proſtrates itſelf before him with the greateſt confuſion and ſorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his preſence: or when, having well conſidered the beauty of holineſs, and the unſpeakable felicity of thoſe that are truly good it panteth after God, and ſendeth up ſuch vigorous and ardent deſires as no words can ſufficiently expreſs; continuing

The advantages of mental prayer.

and

and repeating each of these acts as long as it finds itself upheld by the force and impulse of the previous meditation.

This mental prayer is of all other the most effectual to purify the soul, and dispose it unto a holy and religious temper; and may be termed the great secret of devotion, and one of the most powerful instruments of the divine life. And it may be the apostle hath a peculiar respect unto it when he saith, that *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered*; or as the original may bear, *that cannot be worded*. Yet I do not so much recommend this sort of prayer, as to supersede the use of the other: for we have so many several things to pray for, and every petition of this nature requireth so much time, and so great an intention of spirit, that it were not easy therein to overtake them all: to say nothing that the deep sighs and heavings of the heart which are wont to accompany it, are something oppressive to nature and make it hard to continue long in them. But certainly a few of these inward aspirations will do more than a great many fluent and melting expressions.

Thus,

Thus, my dear friend, I have briefly propoſed the method which I judge proper for moulding the ſoul into a holy frame. And the ſame means which ſerve to beget this divine temper, muſt ſtill be practiſed for ſtrengthening and advancing it: and therefore I ſhall recommend but one more for that purpoſe; and it is the frequent and conſcientious uſe of the holy ſacrament which is peculiarly appointed to nouriſh and increaſe the ſpiritual life, when once it is begotten in the ſoul. All the inſtruments of religion do meet together in this ordinance; and while we addreſs ourſelves unto it, we are put to practiſe all the rules which we mentioned before. Then it is that we make the ſevereſt ſurvey of our actions, and lay the ſtricteſt obligations on ourſelves: then are our minds raiſed to the higheſt contempt of the world, and every grace doth exerciſe itſelf with the greateſt activity and vigour: all the ſubjects of contemplation do there preſent themſelves unto us with the greateſt advantage: and then, if ever, doth the ſoul make its moſt powerful ſallies towards heaven, and aſſault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect

Religion is to be advanced by the ſame means by which it is begun.

The uſe of the holy ſacrament.

neglect or careleſs performance of this duty is one of the chief cauſes that bedwarfs our religion, and makes us continue of ſo low a ſize.

But it is time I ſhould put a cloſe to this letter, which is grown to a far greater bulk than at firſt I intended. If theſe poor papers can do you the ſmalleſt ſervice, I ſhall think myſelf very happy in this undertaking: at leaſt I am hopeful you will kindly accept the ſincere endeavours of a perſon who would fain acquit himſelf of ſome part of that which he owes you.

A PRAYER.

AND now, O moſt gracious God, father and fountain of mercy and goodneſs who haſt bleſſed us with the knowledge of our happineſs, and the way that leadeth unto it, excite in our ſouls ſuch ardent deſires after the one as may put us forth to the diligent proſecution of the other. Let us neither preſume on our own ſtrength, nor diſtruſt thy divine aſſiſtance; but, while we are doing our utmoſt endeavours, teach us ſtill to depend on thee for ſucceſs. Open our eyes, O God, and teach us out of thy law. Bleſs us with an exact and tender

ſenſe

ſenſe of our duty, and a knowledge to diſcern perverſe things. O that our ways were directed to keep thy ſtatutes! Then ſhall we not be aſhamed when we have reſpect unto all thy commandments. Poſſeſs our hearts with a generous and holy diſdain of all thoſe poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our affections, or betray us to any ſin. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy law. Fill our ſouls with ſuch a deep ſenſe and full perſuaſion of thoſe great truths which thou haſt revealed in the goſpel, as may influence and regulate our whole converſation; and that the life which we henceforth live in the fleſh, we may live through faith in the ſon of God. O that the infinite perfections of thy bleſſed nature, and the aſtoniſhing expreſſions of thy goodneſs and love may conquer and overpower our hearts; that they may be conſtantly riſing towards thee in flames of devouteſt affection, and enlarging themſelves in ſincere and cordial love towards all the world for thy ſake; and that we may cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy thee! Finally, O God, grant that the conſidera-

tion

tion of what thou art, and what we ourſelves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and alſo ſtir up in us the ſtrongeſt and moſt ardent aſpirations towards thee. We deſire to reſign and give up ourſelves to the conduct of thy Holy Spirit. Lead us in thy truth, and teach us; for thou art the God of our ſalvation: guide us with thy counſel, and afterwards receive us unto glory for the merits and interceſſion of thy bleſſed ſon our Saviour, Amen.

FINIS.

NINE

DISCOURSES

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

The ſuperior Excellency of the Religious.

PROV. xii. 26.

The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.

HE who conſidereth the excellency and advantage of piety and religion, how conformable it is to the beſt principle of our nature, and how profitable to our intereſts, may juſtly wonder and be ſurpriſed at the bad entertainment it receives in the world; and eaſily conclude, that this muſt needs flow from ſome groſs miſtakes about it, and prejudices againſt it; ſince it is ſo natural to us to love that which is good, and delight in that which is amiable, when things are not miſrepreſented.

Certainly all who are enemies to holi-

neſs, have taken up falſe meaſures and diſadvantageous notions of it. The ſenſual perſon hateth it as harſh and unpleaſant, doing violence to his carnal appetites; and looks on *religion* as a contrivance to deprive and rob him of the pleaſures of this world, by propoſing thoſe of another. The politick wit ſlights it as fooliſh and imprudent; and though he acknowledge it a neceſſary inſtrument of government, a good device to overawe a multidue, yet he counts it a great weakneſs to be further concerned in it than may be conſiſtent with, and ſubſervient to ſecular deſigns. Again, the *gallants* of our age deſpiſe it as a baſe ignoble temper, unworthy of a high birth and genteel education, incident to meaner ſouls, proceeding from cowardly and ſuperſtitious fear, depreſſing the mind, and rendering it incapable of high and aſpiring thoughts. Hence they make it their buſineſs to pour contempt upon *piety*, and advance the reputation of thoſe vitious courſes which they themſelves have embraced; and becauſe there are yet ſome left, who, by practiſing and recommending *virtue*, do oppoſe and condemn their lewd practices, they ſtudy to avenge themſelves on them by the perſecution of their tongues, and

all

all the ſcoffs and reproaches they can invent and utter: which hath proved a mean moſt unhapily ſuccesful to deter many weak minds from goodneſs, making them chuſe to be wicked, that they may not be laughed at.

It is to diſcover the groſſneſs of this miſtake, and expoſe the abſurdities and unreaſonableneſs of theſe principles and practices; to vindicate the excellency of *piety*, and to recommend it to all truly generous ſouls, that we have made choice of this text; which tells us in ſhort and plain terms, that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

None can be ſo little acquainted with the *ſcripture-dialect*, as not to know, that though *righteouſneſs* in its trueſt acceptation importeth only the obſervation of thoſe duties we owe our neighbours, yet it is uſually taken more largely for *piety* and *virtue* in general. And good reaſon too; ſince there is no part of our duty but we owe it as a debt unto God; no exerciſe of *religion* but it is an act of juſtice. Whence the clear importance of the text is, that whatever excellency other perſons may pretend to, the pious and religious men are the truly noble and generous perſons in

the world; as the Pſalmiſt expreſſeth it, *The ſaints are excellent ones in the earth.*

Now, we ſhall not trouble you with any further explication of the words, which are ſo clear, or with any diviſion of a propoſition ſo ſimple; but ſhall illuſtrate and confirm the aſſertion, by producing ſuch undoubted evidences of nobleneſs and excellency, as are proper to *godlineſs*, and to thoſe who practiſe it: where we have occaſion to hint at ſuch characters of a pious man, as, beſides the general deſign, may perhaps ſerve to put us in mind of ſome parts of our duty which we are not careful to obſerve; and which therefore may be uſeful even to thoſe who have already embraced the practice of *religion*.

Being to ſpeak of the nobleneſs and excellency of *religion*, it may be expected we ſhould ſay ſomething of its origin and extract; that being the whole of nobility which ſome underſtand, and others pretend to. We might take occaſion to diſcover the folly of glorying in the antiquity of an illuſtrious houſe, or the famed virtue of worthy anceſtors, who perhaps, were they alive, would diſown their degenerate progeny. But I ſhall not inſiſt upon this; it is a vanity which hath been chaſtiſed ſufficiently

ficiently even by *Heathen pens*. Nay, we ſhall ſo far comply with the common ſentiments of the world, as to acknowledge, that high birth and liberal education may contribute much to elevate the minds of men, and accuſtom them to great thoughts. But ſure, whatever advantages any may pretend to by their birth, there are none to be preferred to the children of God, the blood-royal of heaven, the brethren of Chriſt; of whom we may ſay, that, *as he is, ſo are they, each one reſembling the ſon of a king*.

If we trace the lines of earthly extraction, we ſhall find them all meet in one point, all terminate in duſt and earth. But in the heraldry of heaven we ſhall find a twofold pedigree. Sin is the offspring of hell, and *wicked men are of their father the devil* whoſe work they perform. On the other hand, *holineſs* is the ſeed of God, and the ſaints have obtained to be called *the ſons of the Moſt High*. And think not theſe are empty titles, and big words, to amuſe the world; no, they are equally juſt and important. Pious men are really *partakers of the divine nature*, and ſhall obtain an intereſt in the inheritance which is entailed on that relation. Never were the

qualities of a parent more really derived unto their children, than the image and ſimilitude of the divine excellencies are ſtamped upon theſe heaven-born ſouls: ſome beams of that eternal light are darted in upon them, and make them ſhine with an eminent ſplendor; and they are always aſpiring to a nearer conformity with him, ſtill breathing after a further communication of his Holy Spirit, and daily finding the power thereof correcting the deformities of their natures, and ſuperinducing the beautiful delineations of God's image upon them, that any who obſerve them may perceive their relation to God, by the excellency of their deportment in the world; as will clearly appear in the ſequel of our diſcourſe.

Having ſpoken of the righteous or godly man's excellency, in regard of his birth and extraction, we proceed to conſider his qualities and endowments: and ſhall begin with thoſe of his underſtanding, his knowledge and wiſdom. The *wiſe man* tells us, that *a man of underſtanding is of an excellent ſpirit.* And ſure, if any man in the world is to be accounted of for knowledge, it is the pious man. His knowledge is converſant about the nobleſt objects; he contemplates

contemplates that infinite being, whoſe perfections can never enough be admired, but ſtill afford new matter to aſtoniſh and delight him, to raviſh his affections, to raiſe his wonder. He ſtudies the law of God, *which makes him wiſer then all his teachers.* As the reverend Dr. *Tillotſon* hath it, "It "is deſervedly accounted an excellent piece "of knowledge, to underſtand the laws of "the land, and cuſtoms of the country we "live in; how much more to know the "ſtatutes of heaven, the eternal laws of "righteoſneſs, the will of the univerſal *mo-*"*narch*, and the cuſtoms of that country "where we hope to live for ever." And, if he have a mind to the ſtudies of nature and human ſcience, he is beſt diſpoſed for it, having his faculties cleared, and his underſtanding heightened by divine contemplations.

But his knowledge doth not reſt in ſpeculations, but directeth his practice, and determineth his choice. And he is the moſt prudent as well as the moſt knowing perſon. He knows how to ſecure his greateſt intereſt, to provide for the longeſt life, to prefer ſolid treaſures to gilded trifles, the ſoul to the body, eternity to a moment. He knoweth the temper of his own ſpirit; he

he can moderate his paſſions, and overrule his carnal appetites: which certainly is a far more important piece of wiſdom, than to underſtand the intrigues of a ſtate, to fathom the councils of princes, to know the pulſe of a people, or balance the intereſt of kingdoms. Yea, *piety* doth heighten and advance even moral prudence itſelf; both obliging and directing a man to *order his affairs with diſcretion:* it *maketh the ſimple wiſe.* And what was ſaid by holy *David,* and twice repeated by his wiſe ſon, will hold good in every man's experience, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom.* And thus much of the knowledge and wiſdom wherein the righteous man excelleth his neighbour.

We proceed to another of his endowments, the greatneſs of his mind, and his contempt of the world. We can never take better meaſures of a man's ſpirit, than from the things he delighteth in, and ſets his heart upon: *Qualis amor, talis animus.* To be taken up with trifles, and concerned in little things, is an evidence of a weak and naughty mind. And ſo are all wicked and irreligious perſons. Their thoughts are confined to low and mean things; deſigns of ſcraping together money, or ſpending

ing it in luxury; or of ſatisfying a paſſion or pleaſing a luſt; of obtaining the favour of great ones, or the applauſe of the vulgar. The greateſt happineſs they aim at, is, to be maſter of the country where they live; to dwell in ſtately houſes, and to be backed with a train of attendants; to lie ſoftly, and fare deliciouſly, and ſuch like attainments; which a wiſe man would think himſelf unhappy if he could not deſpiſe.

But the pious perſon hath his thoughts far above theſe painted vanities; his felicity is not patched up of ſo mean ſhreds; it is ſimple, and compriſed in one chief good: his ſoul advanceth itſelf by rational paſſions towards the author of its being, the fountain of goodneſs and pleaſure: *He hath none in heaven but him; and there is none upon earth whom he deſires beſide him.*

The knowledge of nature hath been reputed a good mean to enlarge the ſoul, and breed in it a contempt of earthly enjoyments. He that hath accuſtomed himſelf to conſider the vaſtneſs of the univerſe, and the ſmall proportion which the point we live in bears to the reſt of the world, may perhaps come to think leſs of the poſſeſſion of ſome acres, or of that fame which can at moſt ſpread itſelf through a ſmall corner of

of this earth. Whatever be in this, ſure I am that the knowledge of God, and the frequent thoughts of heaven, muſt needs prove far more effectual to elevate and aggrandize the mind. When once the ſoul by contemplation is raiſed to any right apprehenſion of the divine perfections, and the foretaſtes of celeſtial bliſs; how will this world, and all that is in it, vaniſh and diſappear before his eyes! with what holy diſdain will he look down upon things, which are the higheſt objects of other mens ambitious deſires! All the ſplendor of courts, all the pageantry of greatneſs, will no more dazzle his eyes, than the faint luſtre of a *glow-worm* will trouble the *eagle*, after it hath been beholding the ſun. He is little concerned who obtained this dignity, or that fortune; who ſits higheſt at table, or goes firſt out of the door. His thoughts are taken up with greater matters; how he ſhall pleaſe his maker, and obtain an intereſt in that land of promiſe, ſome of the fruits whereof he hath already taſted. And from thence ariſeth that conſtant and equal frame of ſpirit, which the pious man's mind maintains in all the changes and viciſſitudes of things; while he who hath not his ſpirit balanced with religious principles, is lift up

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and caſt down like a ſhip on the ſea, with every variation of fortune, and partakes perhaps of all the motions of this inferior world, where-unto his heart and affection are faſtened. And certainly he muſt be far more happy and generous both, who ſitteth looſe to the world, and can with the greateſt calmneſs and tranquillity poſſeſs his own ſoul, while all things without are in hurry and confuſion. Private diſaſters cannot diſcompoſe him, nor publick calamities reach him: he looks upon the troubles and combuſtions of the world, as men do on the ruin and deſolation of cities wherein themſelves have little intereſt, with no other concernment than that of pity, to ſee men trouble themſelves and others to ſo little purpoſe. *Si fractus illabatur orbis:* If the world ſhould ſhake, and the foundations of the earth be removed, yet would he reſt ſecure in a full acquieſcence to the will of God, and confident dependance on his providence: *He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings: and his heart is fixed truſting in the Lord.*

And this, by the affinity, will lead us to another endowment, wherein the excellency of the righteous man doth appear; and that is, that heroick magnanimity and courage

courage wherewith he is inſpired, and which makes him confidently atchieve the moſt difficult actions, and reſolutely undergo the hardeſt ſufferings that he is called to. For this ſee the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, chap. xi. ver. 33. *Through faith ſome have ſubdued kingdoms*, &c. this was their active courage; ver. 35. *Others again were tortured*, &c. this was their paſſive courage; which in Chriſtians is moſt eminent and uſeful. True valour doth more appear by ſuffering than by doing; and doubtleſs this is the hardeſt trial of the two. Were it not for ſuffering hardſhips the greateſt coward in the world would be man enough for the higheſt enterprizes. It is not ſo much the difficulty of great actions, as the danger that attends them, which makes men fear to undertake them; ſo that to ſuffer chearfully muſt be the greateſt proof of courage. And ſure, we may appeal to the world to produce ſuch eminent inſtances of fortitude and reſolution, as Chriſtian martyrs have ſhewn under thoſe torments which cannot be mentioned without horror. How often hath their conſtancy amazed their bloody perſecutors, and outwearied the cruelties of their tormentors! Nor was this patience per-force: they might

might have ſaved themſelves that trouble, by throwing a little incenſe into the fire, or ſpeaking a few blaſphemous words; but well had they learned *not to fear thoſe who can kill the body*, &c. Nor were they born out by an obſtinate humour, and perverſe Stoical wilfulneſs: they were neither ſtupid and inſenſible, nor proud and ſelf-conceited; but their ſufferings were undertaken with calmneſs, and ſuſtained with moderation.

Let *Heathen Rome* boaſt of a *Regulus*, a *Decius*, or ſome two or three more, ſtimulated by a deſire of glory, and animated by ſome ſecret hopes of future reward, who have devoted their life to the ſervice of their country. But, alas! what is this to an infinite number, not only of men, but even of women and children, who have died for the profeſſion of their faith; neither ſeeking or expecting any praiſe from men? And tell me who among the Heathen did willingly endure the loſs of reputation? Nay, that was their idol, and they could not part with it. And certainly it is a great meanneſs of ſpirit, to be overawed by fear of diſgrace, and depend upon the thoughts of the people. True courage doth equally fortify the mind againſt all thoſe evils, and will make

a man hazard his honour, as well as other things, when occaſion calls for it.

Now, if the celebrated actions of the Heathens come ſhort of true courage, what ſhall we ſay of the furious boldneſs of the Hectors of our age, who pretend to proweſs and gallantry by far leſs reaſonable methods? when, blinded with paſſion, and animated with wine, they are ready enough, on half a quarrel, to hazard their own, and their neighbour's life, and ſoul too, in a duel? they will not ſtand to brave heaven itſelf, and to provoke the Almighty by their horrid oaths and blaſphemies. And one ſhould think, that theſe muſt needs be the hardieſt and moſt valiant people in the world, if they are not afraid of the Almighty, ſure nothing elſe ſhould fright them. And yet you ſhall find thoſe very perſons, when caſt on a bed by ſickneſs, or brought to the ſcaffold by juſtice, to betray a miſerable faintneſs and puſillanimity: they are forced now to think on the terrors of death, and the more terrible conſequences of it; and their counterfeit courage, being deſtitute of thoſe props which formerly ſuſtained it, doth now diſcover its weakneſs. Nor is it any wonder: for what ſhould make a man

man willingly leave this world, unleſs he expected a more happy condition in another? Certainly there is nothing can fortify the ſoul with a true and manly courage, but a confidence in God, and hopes of future bleſſedneſs. *The Wicked flee when no man purſueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion;* and from that accounted *more excellent than his neighbour.*

From courage and magnanimity, we paſs to that which is the genuine iſſue and ordinary conſequent of it, the *liberty* and *freedom* of the righteous perſon. Liberty is a privilege ſo highly rated by all men, that many run the greateſt hazards for the very name of it: but there are few that enjoy it. I ſhall not ſpeak of thoſe fetters of ceremony, and chains of ſtate, wherewith great men are tied; which makes their actions conſtrained, and their converſe uneaſy: this is more to be pitied than blamed. But wicked and irreligous perſons are under a far more ſhameful bondage: they are ſlaves to their own luſts and ſuffer the violence and tyranny of their irregular appetites. This is frequently talked of, but ſeldom conſidered or believed; and therefore it will not be amiſs to bring an inſtance or two for the illuſtration of it. Obſerve a paſ-

ſionate man, and you ſhall find him frequently tranſported and overpowered by his anger, and carried to thoſe extremities, of which a little time makes him aſhamed; and he becomes as much diſpleaſed with himſelf, as formerly he was with his adverſary: and yet, on the next occaſion, he will obey the ſame paſſion which he hath condemned. What a drudge is a covetous man to his riches, which take up his thoughts all the day long, and break his ſleep in the night! How muſt the ambitious man fawn and flatter, and croſs his humour with hopes to ſatisfy it; ſtoop to the ground that he may aſpire, courting and careſſing thoſe whom he hates; which doubtleſs is done with a great violence and conſtraint! The drunkard, when he awakes, and hath ſlept out his cups and his frolick humour, and finds his head aking, his ſtomach qualmiſh, and perhaps his purſe empty, and reflects on the folly and unhandſome expreſſions or actions he may have fallen into in his drink, how will he condemn himſelf for that exceſs! what harangues ſhall we have from him in the praiſe of temperance! what promiſes and reſolutions of future ſobriety! and yet, on the next occaſion, the poor ſlave ſhall be dragged

dragged away to the tavern by thoſe whom he muſt call his friends; and thank them who put that abuſe upon him, which a wiſe and ſober perſon will rather die than ſuffer. Further, the luxurious would fain preſerve or recover his health; and to this end finds it requiſite to keep a temperate and ſober diet. No; but he muſt not. He is preſent at a feaſt, and his ſuperior appetite calls for a large meaſure of delicious fare; and his palate muſt be pleaſed, though the whole body ſhould ſuffer for it: or he hath met with a lewd woman; and though his whole bones ſhould rot, *and a dart ſtrike through his liver*, yet muſt he obey the commands of his luſts: *He goeth after her ſtraightway, as the ox to the ſlaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the ſtocks.* Now, there can be no greater evidence of ſlavery and bondage, than thus to do what themſelves know to be prejudicial. It were eaſy to illuſtrate this bondage and thraldom of the ſoul in all the other inſtances of vice and impiety. And certainly what St. *Peter* ſaith of ſome falſe teachers, may be well applied to all wicked perſons, *While they promiſe freedom, they themſelves are the ſervants of corruption: for of whom a*

man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought in bondage.

But the holy and religious perſon hath broken theſe fetters, caſt off the yoke of ſin, and become the freeman of the Lord. It is religion that reſtores freedom to the ſoul, which philoſophy did pretend to: it is that which doth ſway and moderate all thoſe blind paſſions and impetuous affections, which elſe would hinder a man from the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of himſelf; and makes him maſter of his own thoughts, motions, and deſires that he may do with freedom what he judgeth moſt honeſt and convenient. And thus *the righteous man excelleth his neighbour*, as much as the freeman doth the baſeſt ſlave.

Another particular wherein the nobleneſs and excellency of religion doth appear, is in a charitable and benign temper. There is no greater evidence of a baſe and narrow ſoul, than for a man to have all his thoughts taken up about private and ſelfiſh intereſt; and ſo, if they be well, not to care what becometh of the reſt of the world. On the other hand, an extenſive charity and kindneſs, as it is the one half of our religion, ſo it is an eminent point of generoſity.

roſity. *The righteous is gracious and full of compaſſion; he ſheweth favour and lendeth;* and makes it his work to ſerve mankind as much as he is able. His bounty is not confined to his kindred and relations, to thoſe of his own party and mode of religion: this were but a diſguiſed kind of ſelf-love. It is enough to him that they are Chriſtians; or, if they were not, yet are they men; and therefore deſerve our pity, but not our hatred or neglect, becauſe of their errors. It is true, he carries a ſpecial kindneſs for thoſe in whom he diſcovers a principle of goodneſs and virtue; in thoſe excellent ones is all his delight. But then, he doth not take his meaſure ſo much from their judgment and opinions, as from the integrity of their life, and exactneſs of their practices.

His charity doth not expreſs itſelf in one particular inſtance, as that of giving of alms; but is vented as many ways as the variety of occaſions do call for, and his power can reach to. He aſſiſteth the poor with his money, the ignorant with his counſel, the afflicted with his comfort, the ſick with the beſt of his ſkill, all with his bleſſings and prayers. If he cannot build hoſpitals, yet he will ſtudy to perſuade

thoſe who can: if he hath no money to redeem captives, yet will he employ his intereſt in the court of heaven for their deliverance: though he cannot recover a dying child to the afflicted parents, yet will he endeavour to perſuade them to ſubmiſſion and reſignation, which will render them more happy; and will go hard, but he will find ſome way, either to benefit or oblige every man with whom he converſeth. Let no man upbraid us with the contrary practices of many high pretenders to religion, who are notedly ſelfiſh and churliſh perſons. We are not to defend the actions of all who would be thought godly: nor muſt you take your meaſures of piety from what you obſerve in them. But look through the goſpel, and you ſhall find charity and bounty ſo paſſionately recommended, ſo frequently inculcated, and ſo indiſpenſably required, that you may eaſily conclude there are no Chriſtians in earneſt, but thoſe who practiſe it. Yea, ſo peculiar is this liberal and benign temper to holy and religious perſons, that nothing but a faint reſemblance and falſe imitation is to be found elſewhere in the world. Other mens ſeeming bounty is always marred by the baſe principle it proceeds from, and

and ſelfiſh end it tends to. The Apoſtle hath told us that *a man may give all his goods to feed the poor and yet want charity;* and all theſe expences ſhall profit him nothing. Importunity may perhaps wring ſomething out of his pockets, or a willingneſs to be delivered from the trouble of a miſerable ſpectacle; but vanity, and a deſire of applauſe, have uſually the greateſt intereſt in his diſtributions. This made the hypocrites of old proclaim their alms with trumpets; and this makes their ſucceſſors in our times delight to have their good works of this kind recorded to the greateſt advantage, that poſterity may read them on walls and publick regiſters.

To the ſame principle muſt we refer what in the world paſſeth for a very conſiderable inſtance of generoſity, the keeping of a great houſe and well-furniſhed table: which nevertheleſs is more ordinarily the effect of pride and vain-glory, than of humility or hoſpitality. It is a part of their ſplendor and ſtate; and they deck their tables for the ſame end that they put on fine cloaths, to be talked of and admired in the world. You may gueſs it by the perſons whom they entertain; who are uſually ſuch as need leaſt of their charity,

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and for whom they have many times as little kindneſs or concerment, as an inn-keeper for his gueſts; nor are they leſs mercenary than he; the one ſells his meat for money, the other for praiſe. Far more generous is the practice of the pious man; who, as he chuſeth moſt to benefit thoſe who can make him no recompence, ſo he doth not trouble the world with the noiſe of his charity; yea *his left hand knoweth not what his right hand beſtoweth:* and that which doth moſt endear his bounty, is the love and affection whence it proceeds.

We ſhall name but one inſtance more wherein *the righteous man excelleth his neighbour;* and that is, his venerable temperance and purity. He hath riſen above the vaporous ſphere of ſenſual pleaſure, which darkeneth and debaſeth the mind, which ſullies its luſtre, and abates its native vigour; while profane perſons, wallowing in impure luſts, do ſink themſelves below the condition of men. Can there be any ſpark of generoſity, any degree of excellency in him who makes his belly his god, or places his felicity in the embraces of a ſtrumpet? We ſpoke before of the ſlavery, we ſpeak now of the deformity of theſe ſins; and ſhall add, that one of the moſt

ſhameful

ſhameful and miſerable ſpectacles in the world, is, to ſee a man born to the uſe of reaſon, and perhaps to an eminent fortune, drink away his religion, his reaſon, his ſenſe; and ſo expoſe himſelf to the pity of wiſe men, the contempt of his own ſervants, the deriſion of his children, and fools, to every danger, and to every ſnare; and that this muſt paſs in the eyes of many for a piece of gallantry, and neceſſary accompliſhment of a gentleman. Good God! how are the minds of men poiſoned with perverſe notions? what unreaſonable meaſures do they take of things? We may expect next they ſhall commend theft, and make harangues to the praiſe of parricide; for they are daily advancing the boldneſs of their impieties, and with confidence avowing them. Other ages have practiſed wickedneſs; but to ours is reſerved the impudence to glory in them. But would men but open their own eyes, and give way to the ſentiments of their own minds, they would ſoon alter their maxims, and diſcover the miſerable deformity of vice, and the amiable beauty and majeſty of religion: that it doth at once adorn and advance the human nature, and hath in it every thing generous and noble, chearful

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and ſpiritual, free and ingenious; in a word, that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

Before we proceed further it will be neceſſary to take off ſome prejudices and objections that ariſe againſt the nobleneſs and excellency of religion. And the firſt is, That it injoineth lowlineſs and humility; which men look upon as an abject and vile diſpoſition. What! will they ſay, can ever that man aſpire to any thing that is excellent, whoſe principles oblige him to lie low and grovel on the ground; who thinks nothing of himſelf, and is content that all the world think nothing of him? Is this a diſpoſition fit for any but thoſe whoſe croſs fortune obliges them to ſuffer miſeries and affronts? Such are mens thoughts of humility, which God loves ſo much, that we may ſay he ſent his own Son from heaven, to teach and recommend it. But if we ponder the matter, we ſhall find, that arrogancy and pride are the iſſues of baſe and ſilly minds, a giddineſs incident to thoſe who are raiſed ſuddenly to unaccuſtomed height; nor is there any vice doth more palpably defeat its own deſign, depriving a man of that honour and reputation which it makes him aim at.

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On the other hand, we ſhall find humility no ſilly and ſneaking quality; but the greateſt height and ſublimity of the mind, and the only way to true honour: *Before deſtruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.* Lowlineſs is the endowment of high-born and well-educated ſouls who are acquainted with the knowledge of excellent things; and therefore do not doat upon trifles, or admire little things merely becauſe they are their own. They have no ſuch high opinion of riches, beauty, ſtrength, or other the like advantages, as to value themſelves for them, or to deſpiſe thoſe who want them: but they ſtudy to ſurmount themſelves, and all the little attainments they have hitherto reached, and are ſtill aſpiring to higher and more noble things. And it is worth our notice, "That "the moſt deep and pure humility doth not "ſo much ariſe from the conſideration of "our faults and defects, (though that alſo "may have its own place), as from a calm "contemplation of the divine perfections. "By reflecting on ourſelves, we may diſcover ſomething of our own ſinfulneſs and "miſery; and thereby be filled with a kind "of boiſterous and turbulent grief and indignation: but, by fixing our eyes on the

" infinite greatneſs and holineſs of God, we " are moſt fully convinced of our own " meanneſs. This will ſink us to the very " bottom of our beings, and make us ap- " pear as nothing in our own ſight, when " beheld from ſo great a height." And this is really the greateſt elevation of the ſoul; and there is nothing in the world ſo noble and excellent as the ſublimity of humble minds.

Another objection againſt the excellency of a religious temper, is, That the love of enemies, and pardon of injuries, which it includeth, is utterly inconſiſtent with the principles of honour. Now, tho' it be highly unreaſonable to examine the laws of our Saviour by ſuch rules as this, yet we ſhall conſider the matter a little. Nor ſhall we ſeek to elude or qualify this precept, as ſome men do by ſuch gloſſes and evaſions as may ſuit with their own practices: nay, we ſhall freely profeſs, that there is no ſalvation without the obſervation of it. A man had even as well abandon Chriſtianity, and renounce his baptiſm, as obſtinately refuſe to obey it. But if we have any value for the judgment of the wiſeſt man and a great King, he will tell us, that *it is the honour of a man to ceaſe from*

from ſtrife; and *he that is ſlow to wrath, is of great underſtanding*. The meek and lowly perſon liveth above the reach of petty injuries; and blunts the edge of the greateſt by his patience and conſtancy; and hath compaſſion towards thoſe who offend him: being more ſorry for the prejudice they do themſelves, than for that which they intended him. And let all the world judge whether it be more generous to pity and love even thoſe who hate us, and to pardon the greateſt offences, than peeviſhly to quarrel on every petty occaſion, and make men fear our paſſion, hate our humour, and abandon our ſociety? So that what is here brought as an objection againſt religion, might with reaſon enough have been brought as an inſtance of its nobleneſs.

Having thus illuſtrated and confirmed what is aſſerted in the text, that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*; let us improve it in a check to that profane and athieſtical ſpirit of drollery and ſcoffing at religion, which hath got abroad in the world. Alas! do men conſider what it is which they make the butt of their ſcoffs and reproaches; Have they nothing elſe to exerciſe their wit and vent their jeſts upon, but that which is the moſt noble and

excellent thing in the world? What deſign can they propoſe unto themſelvs by this kind of impiety? Would they have religion baniſhed from the face of the earth and forced to retire for ſhame? What a goodly world ſhould we then have of it! what a fine harmony and order of things! Certainly the earth would become a kind of hell, with tumults and ſeditions, rapines and murders, ſecret malice, and open frauds, by every vice and every calamity. 'Tis only ſome little remainders of piety and virtue in the world that keep it in any tolerable condition, or make it poſſible to be inhabited. And muſt not theſe be wretched perſons, and woful enemies to mankind, who do what they can to reduce the world to ſuch a miſerable condition? But let them do what they will; they but kick againſt the pricks. Religion hath ſo much native luſtre and beauty, that, notwithſtanding all the dirt they ſtudy to caſt upon it, all the melancholy and deformed ſhapes they dreſs it in, it will attract the eyes and admiration of all ſober and ingenious perſons: and while theſe men ſtudy to make it ridiculous, they ſhall but make themſelves ſo. And O! that they would conſider how dear they are to pay for thoſe dull and inſipid

ſipid jeſts wherewith they perſecute religion, and thoſe who practiſe it or recommend it! what thoughts they are like to have of them when ſickneſs ſhall arreſt, and death threaten them; when the phyſicians have forſaken them, and the poor deſpiſed Miniſter is called in, and they expecting comfort from him they were wont to mock, and perhaps it is little he can afford them! *O that they were wiſe and underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end.*

There are others who have not yet arrived to this height of profaneneſs, to laugh at all religion; but do vent their malice at thoſe who are more conſcientious and ſevere than themſelves, under preſumption that they are hypocrites and diſſemblers. But beſides that in this they may be guilty of a great deal of uncharitableneſs, it is to be ſuſpected that they bear ſome ſecret diſlike to piety itſelf, and hate hypocriſy more for its reſemblance of that, than for its own vitiouſneſs: otherwiſe whence comes it that they do not expreſs the ſame animoſity againſt other vices?

Hitherto alſo may we refer thoſe expreſſions which ſometimes drop from perſons not ſo utterly debauched, but which yet are blaſphemous and profane; that this man

is too holy, and that man too religious; as if it were poſſible to exceed in theſe things. What! can a man approach too near to God? Can he be too like his maker? Is it poſſible to be over-perfect, or over-happy? I confeſs a man may over-act ſome parts of his religion, and be too much in ſome particular exerciſes of it, neglecting other as neceſſary duties. But this is not an exceſs of piety, but a defect of diſcretion. And reaſon would teach us rather to pardon mens infirmities for their pious inclinations, than to blame piety for their infirmities.

Let me therefore intreat you all, eſpecially thoſe whoſe birth and fortunes render them more conſpicuous in the world, to countenance holineſs, which you ſee is ſo excellent; and beware that you do not contribute to that deluge of wickedneſs that over-floweth the earth, by ſcoffing at the moſt ſerious things in the world. And, if I obtain this, I ſhall make bold to beg one thing more, but it is in your own favours; that you would alſo abandon every kind of impiety in your own practice, ſince in it every vile *ruffian* may vie and contend with you. In other caſes you forſake modes and cuſtoms when they become common. Wickdeneſs is now the moſt vulgar and ordinary

ordinary thing in the World. Shift I beſeech you, the faſhion, and embrace piety and virtue; wherein none but excellent perſons ſhall rival you. Learn to adore your maker; and think it not below you to ſtand in awe of him who can rend the heavens, and make the foundations of the earth ſhake; who needs but to withdraw his mercies to make you miſerable, or his aſſiſtance to reduce you to nothing. Study to enoble your ſouls with ſolid knowledge and true wiſdom; with an eminent greatneſs of mind, and contempt of the world; a great liberty and freedom of ſpirit; an undaunted magnanimity and courage; an extenſive charity and goodneſs; a venerable temper and purity; an amiable meekneſs and humility: ſo ſhall you render yourſelves honourable, *and more excellent than your neighbours* in this world; and be partakers of immortal honour and glory in the world to come. *Amen.*

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INDISPENSABLE DUTY of loving our ENEMIES.

LUKE vi. 27.

But I ſay unto you which hear, Love your Enemies.

WHILE we travel through the wilderneſs of this world, much of the comfort of our pilgrimage depends on the good correſpondence, and mutual ſervices and endearments of our fellow-travellers. Therefore our bleſſed Saviour, whoſe precepts are all intended for our perfection and felicity, fitted to procure to us both the good things of this world, and that which is to come, has taken eſpecial care to join and unite the minds of men in the ſtricteſt bonds of friendſhip and love. He hath been at great pains by his precepts and by his example, by earneſt perſuaſions and powerful motives, to ſmooth our rugged humours, and calm our paſſions, and take off the the roughneſs and aſperity from our natures, which hinders us from joining and cementing together. Now, were we

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to converſe with none but ſuch as are Chriſtians in earneſt, we ſhould find it no hard matter to live in concord and love; we ſhould meet with no occaſion of quarrel and contention; and ſhould only be obliged to love our *friends*, becauſe all men would be ſuch. But well did our Saviour know, that his part was to be ſmall in the world; that many would oppoſe the profeſſion, and many more would neglect the practice of that religion which he taught; and that his followers, beſides common injuries incident to others, were to meet with much enmity and hatred for their maſter's ſake; and therefore, that, amidſt all theſe ſtorms, they might maintain that conſtant ſerene tranquillity, that amiable ſweetneſs and benignity of ſpirit, without which they could neither be like him, nor happy in themſelves, he was pleaſed to injoin ſuch an ardent affection and charity towards all men as no neglect can cool, no injury can extinguiſh. To love thoſe who have obliged us, is that which nature might teach, and wicked men practiſe; to favour thoſe who have never wronged us, is but a piece of common humanity: but our religion requires us to extend our kindneſs even to thoſe who have injured and abuſed

us,

us, and who continue to do and wiſh us miſchief; and that we never deſign any other revenge againſt our moſt bitter and inveterate enemies, than to wiſh them well, and do them all the good we can, whether they will or not: for unto *thoſe that hear him*, our Saviour ſaith, *Love your enemies.*

But, alas! how little is this minded by the greater part of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians! Other precepts are broken and ſlighted, but this induſtriouſly baffled and diſcredited by us. In other caſes we acknowledge our fault, but ſtudy to qualify and excuſe it by the frailty of our nature, or violence of a temptation: (We are all ſinners; it is a fault indeed; but who can help it?) Now, though theſe excuſes, God knows, are very frivolous, and will be of no force in the great day of our accounts; yet they imply ſomething of modeſty and ingenuous acknowledgement; and men may repent and forſake what they already condemn. But in the inſtance of loving enemies, and pardoning offences, many are ſo bold and impudent, that, inſtead of obeying, they quarrel with the law as impoſſible or unjuſt; paſſing ſentence upon that by which themſelves

themſelves muſt be judged. How unreaſonable is it (ſay they) that we ſhould love thoſe that hate us? What congruity between that act and thoſe objects? Can cold ſnow produce heat, or enmity beget affection? Muſt we be inſenſible of the injuries we meet with, or reward him that offers them! Muſt we diſſolve the principles of our nature, and ceaſe to be *men*, that we may become *Chriſtians?* Theſe, and ſuch like, are either the expreſſions or thoughts of too many among us; and either Chriſt muſt come down in his offers, and remit ſomewhat of the rigour of his laws, or elſe all the promiſes of the goſpel, all the pleaſures of the other world, ſhall not engage them to his obedience. They will rather chuſe to burn in eternal flames of fury and diſcord, than live at peace with thoſe that have wronged them.

It can therefore never be unſeaſonable to preſs a duty ſo very neceſſary, yet ſo much neglected. The text I have choſen for this purpoſe, is very plain and clear: *Love your enemies.* But, becauſe many do ſtrain the precept to ſome ſuch ſenſe as may ſuit with their own practice, we ſhall firſt ſearch into the importance of it, and then perſuade you to perform it. The full

meaning

meaning and importance of the precept will appear, if we conſider, 1*ſt*, Who they are whom we are commanded to love; and, 2*dly*, Wherein the love we owe them does conſiſt.

The perſons whom we are commanded to love, are called our *enemies*. And, leſt we ſhould miſtake them, they are clearly deſcribed in the following words. The fountain of their enmity is within. They are thoſe *who hate us;* who envy our happineſs, who wiſh our miſery, and abhor our perſons and ſociety. But, were this fire kept within their breaſt, it might well ſcorch themſelves it could not prejudice us: but *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh;* their malice does ſharpen their tongues. They are farther deſcribed as thoſe that *curſe us;* they vent their wrath in oaths and imprecations, ſecret calumnies, and open reproaches. Nor are their hands always bound up; they *uſe us deſpitefully*, and procure us miſchief. Now, if our love muſt be extended to all theſe, we ſhall hardly find any whom we dare ſafely exclude. Of our private enemies there can be no queſtion. But what ſhall be ſaid of the enemies of our country, I ſee no warrant to exclude them from

from our charity. We may indeed lawfully oppoſe their violent invaſion, and defend our rights with the ſword, under the banner of the publick magiſtrate, to whom ſuch authority is committed: but all this may be done with as little malice and hatred as a judge may puniſh a malefactor; the General may be as void of paſſion as the Lord Chief juſtice; and the ſoldier, as the executioner. But charity will oblige a prince never to have recourſe to the ſword, till all other remedies fail; to blunt the edge of war, by ſparing, as much as may be, the ſhedding of innocent blood, with all other barbarities that uſe to accompany it: and to accept of any reaſonable capitulation.

We come next to the enemies of our religion. And indeed there are many who are ſo far from thinking them to be among the number of thoſe whom they are obliged to love, that they look upon it as a part of their duty to hate and malign them. Their zeal is continually venting itſelf in fierce invectives againſt Antichriſt, and every thing they are pleaſed to call Antichriſtian: And they are ready to apply all the prophecies and imprecations of the Old Teſtament, in their very prayers, againſt thoſe that differ from them.

And ordinarily the animoſities are greateſt where the differences are leaſt; and one party of a reformed church ſhall be more incenſed againſt another, than either againſt the ſuperſtition and tyranny of *Rome*, or the carnality of the *Mahometan* faith. Yea, perhaps, you may find ſome who agree in opinion, and only differ in ſeveral ways of expreſſing the ſame thing, and yet can ſcarce look on one another without diſpleaſure and averſion. But, alas! how much do theſe men diſparage that religion for which they appear ſo zealous! how much do they miſtake the ſpirit of Chriſtianity! Are the perſons whom they hate, greater enemies to religion, than thoſe who perſecuted the Apoſtles and martyrs for profeſſing it? And yet theſe were the perſons whom our Saviour commanded his diſciples to love: and himſelf did pray for thoſe that crucified him; and ſeverely checked the diſciples, when, by a precedent brought from the Old Teſtament, they would have called for fire from heaven on thoſe who would not receive them; telling them, *They knew not what ſpirit they were of: i. e.* They did not conſider by what ſpirit they were prompted to ſuch cruel inclinations; or,

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as others explain it, they did not yet ſufficiently underſtand the temper and genius of Chriſtianity; which is *pure and peaceable, gentle and meek: full of ſweetneſs, and full of love.* If men would impartially examine their hatred and animoſities againſt the enemies of their religion, I fear they would find them proceed from a principle which themſelves would not willingly own. Pride and ſelf-conceit will make a man diſdain thoſe of a different perſuaſion; and think it a diſparagement to his judgment, that any ſhould differ from it. Mere nature and ſelf-love will make a man hate thoſe who oppoſe the intereſt and advancement of that party which himſelf has eſpouſed. Hence men are many times more diſpleaſed at ſome ſmall miſtakes in judgment, than the greateſt immoralities in practice; yea, perhaps, they will find a ſecret pleaſure, and wicked ſatisfaction, in hearing or reporting the faults or ſcandal of their adverſaries. Certainly the power of religion rightly prevailing in the ſoul, would mould us into another temper: it would teach us to love and pity, and pray for the perſon, as well as hate and condemn the errors they are ſuppoſed to eſpouſe; it would make us wiſh

their converſion rather than their confuſion; and be more deſirous that God would fit them for another world, than that he would take them out of this. We may indeed wiſh the diſappointment of their wicked purpoſes; for this is charity to them, to keep them from being the unhappy inſtruments of miſchief in the world: but he that can wiſh plagues and ruin to their perſons, and delights in their ſins, or in their miſery, hath more of the devil than the Chriſtian.

Thus you have ſeen who thoſe enemies are to whom our charity muſt be extended. It follows to be conſidered, what is the nature of the love we owe them. I ſhall not now ſpend your time in any nice or curious ſpeculations about the nature of this maſter-paſſion. It is the prime affection of the ſoul, which gives meaſures, and ſets bounds to all the reſt; every man's hatred, grief, and joy, depending upon, and flowing from his love. I ſhall now only obſerve to you, that there is a ſenſible kind of love, a certain tenderneſs and melting affection implanted in us by nature towards our neareſt relations, on purpoſe to engage us to thoſe peculiar ſervices we owe them; and there is an intimacy and

and delightful union betwixt friends, arising from some especial sympathy of humours, and referring to the maintenance of such correspondencies. These are not always at our command; nor are we obliged to love either strangers or enemies at this rate. It is not to be expected, that at first sight of a person who hath nothing singularly taking, we should find such a special kindness and tenderness arising for him in our hearts; much less can fondness and passionate affection proceed from the sense of any harm received from him. The command in the text does not amount to this, (tho' there be a great advantage in a tender and affectionate disposition, both to secure and facilitate our duty); but we are certainly obliged to such a sincere and cordial good-will to all men, as will incline us to perform all the good offices we can, even to those who have offended us. But the nature and measures of this love will more fully appear, if we consider what it does exclude, and what it does imply.

First, then, it excludes all harsh thoughts and groundless suspicions. The Apostle telleth us, that *charity thinketh no evil; that it hopeth all things, believeth all things.*

To entertain, with pleaſure, every bad report of thoſe who have offended us, and to put the worſt conſtruction on their doubtful actions, is both a clear evidence of our hatred, and an unhappy method to continue it. Were once the love we recommend ſeated in the ſoul, it would ſoon caſt out thoſe reſtleſs jealouſies, ſour ſuſpicions, harſh ſurmiſes, and imbittered thoughts; and diſplay itſelf in a more candid and gentle diſpoſition; in fair gloſſes, and friendly cenſures; in a favourable extenuation of greater faults, and covering of leſſer. It would make a man interpret all things in the beſt meaning they are capable of; and chuſe rather to be miſtaken to his own prejudice, by a too favourable opinion, than to his neighbour's, by a groundleſs jealouſy. And even in this ſenſe it may be, that *charity covereth a multitude of ſins.*

Again, The love which we owe to enemies, excludes all cauſeleſs and immoderate anger: *It ſuffereth long, and is not eaſily provoked; endureth all things.* Our Saviour tells us, that *whoſo is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment:* and if his anger exceed the cauſe, he is equally guilty. All anger is not vitious; we may be angry, and not

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ſin. This paſſion, as all others implanted in us by God, is innocent when kept within its due bounds: it has its proper office in the mind, as the ſpleen in the body; but its exceſs and diſtemper ſwells into a diſeaſe. To make it allowable, it muſt not exceed the value of the cauſe nor the proportion of the circumſtances. It muſt be governed by diſcretion, and kept within the bounds of reaſon, that it break not forth into indecent expreſſions, or violent and blameable actions. And further, it muſt not be too permanent and laſting; we muſt not let the ſun ſet upon our anger. *Plutarch* tells us, that the *Pythagoreans* were careful to obſerve the very letter of this precept: for if anger had boiled up to the height of an injury or reproach, before ſun-ſet they would ſalute each other and renew their friendſhip; they were aſhamed that the ſame anger which had diſturbed the counſels of the day, ſhould alſo trouble the quiet and repoſe of the night, leſt, mingling with their reſt and dreams, it ſhould become prevalent and habitual in them. And, ſure, we owe an infinitely greater deference to the precepts of our bleſſed Saviour, and his holy apoſtles, than they did to their maſter's reaſoning and advices.

advices. And though we ſhould not take this precept in its ſtricteſt and literal ſignification, yet this we muſt know, that the ſame paſſion and reſentment which was innocent and rational in its firſt riſe, may become vitious and criminal by its continuance. *Anger* may kindle in the breaſt of a wiſe man, but reſts only *in the boſom of a fool.* And this will lead us to a third thing which the precept in our text does condemn.

The love of enemies here commanded, does exclude all rooted malice and rancour, proceeding from the memory and reſentment of injuries, after the prejudice and harm ſuſtained by them is over. Certainly there is nothing more contrary to charity, than a peeviſh ruminating and poring on the offences we have met with; and their memories are very ill employed who ſeldom remember a courteſy, or forget a wrong. It is ordinary for ſome who dare not profeſs intentions of revenge, to expreſs their reſentment in ſome ſuch threatening as this: That they will forgive the injury, but never forget it. I hope they do not mean, they will paſs it at this time, and revenge it afterward. This would but make the ſin the greater, by being more deliberate. Is it then that they intend them no harm,

harm, but will ceaſe to do them good? This is a lame and imperfect charity; expreſsly contradictory to the precept in the text, injoining us to *bleſs them that curſe us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us.* Nor muſt we expect the bleſſing of God, if this be all we allow to others; *for with what meaſure we mete, it ſhall be meaſured to us again.* There is but one way we may lawfully remember an injury and that is ſo as to be more cautious in truſting one who hath deceived us, or expoſing ourſelves to the power of him who hath wronged us. In this caſe religion does allow and direct us to join the ſerpent's wiſdom with the dove's innocency. But then, I am ſure, it is neither neceſſary nor fit to threaten thoſe who have wronged us, with our reſolutions to remember the injury. We may be as cautious as we pleaſe without it; and thoſe threats do nothing but rankle and diſpleaſe our adverſary, which ought to be no part of a Chriſtian's deſign. A meek and charitable perſon will be loth to have his memory infeſted, and his thoughts ſoured with reſentment of wrongs: and if they occur to his mind, he will make no other uſe of them, than to put himſelf on his guard unleſs

leſs from thence he take occaſion to benefit and oblige the perſon who has offended him, and, as our text expreſsly directs, to *do him good, to bleſs and pray for him.*

Again, this precept does exclude and prohibit the taking or procuring any revenge. By *revenge*, we mean ſuch a ſimple evil done to our adverſary, as does bring no real benefit or reputation to ourſelves. For certainly it is not unlawful to ſeek the reparation of our own right by an authoriſed judge, nor yet to provide for the publick ſecurity by the puniſhment of offenders, unleſs ſome ſpecial circumſtance makes it ſo. This may many times be done without prejudice or hatred, yea with great kindneſs and compaſſion towards the perſon of the offender. But, if we have any charity or love to our adverſaries, we ſhall be really afflicted with the evil that befals them; and therefore will never willingly procure ourſelves that trouble by inflicting it on them. It is an evidence of a wicked and malicious humour to pleaſe ourſelves in the miſery of another, or delight in an evil that brings us no good. Whatever latitude the *Jews* either had or pretended to, it is not lawful for us to deſire *eye for eye*, or *tooth for tooth*, unleſs we could ſay, that

that his eye would ſerve our head, or his hand fit our arm, or his pain allay our torment, which he had procured to us.

From hence we may judge what is to be thought of thoſe who are ready to revenge the ſmalleſt injury, even an uncivil expreſſion, with the death of the offender; never being ſatisfied till they have ventured two lives and as many ſouls, in the combat: A thing which ſhould not be named among Chriſtians, but with the ſame deteſtation we have againſt the vileſt actions; for whatever colours of bravery or gallantry it may be painted with, it is really nothing elſe than a more ſpecious and formal kind of murder. Nor does it differ from the baſeſt aſſaſſination, ſave only in this, with the wickedneſs of attemping another's life it joins the raſhneſs and folly of expoſing our own.

Laſtly, The love which we owe our enemies, does exclude all ſupercilious and ſcornfull contempt and neglect of them. Which I mark the rather, becauſe ſome think they have ſufficiently obeyed the precept, if they overlook an injury, as thinking the perſon below their revenge. Mean while their corrupt nature reliſhes as much pleaſure in the ſcorn and diſdain

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of their enemies, as it could in the revenge of the injury: their wicked humours are not ſtarved, but only change their diet. Of this nature was the anſwer of the philoſopher, to ſome who incited and provoked him to revenge, *If an aſs kick me, ſhall I kick him again?* This is but a lame and miſhapen charity; it hath more of pride than goodneſs. We ſhould learn of the *holy Jeſus*, who was not only *meek, but lowly*. We ſhould contemn the injury, and pity the weakneſs, but ſhould not diſdain or deſpiſe the perſons of our enemies. *Charity vaunteth not herſelf, is not puffed up, doth not behave herſelf unſeemly.*

Having thus diſcovered thoſe things which are inconſiſtent with charity, and excluded by the *love of enemies*, it remains that we ſhew what it does import and require.

Firſt, then it imports an inward kindneſs and affection; which if it does not amount to that paſſionate tenderneſs which we have for our near relations and intimate friends, yet it implies a good-will towards them, and friendly concernment in their intereſt. If we love an enemy, we ſhall wiſh his welfare, and rejoice in it, and be unfeignedly ſorry for any diſaſter that befals him; ſo far

far ſhall we be from rejoicing in his misfortunes. And certainly had we a right ſenſe of things, we ſhould be more troubled for the harm which our enemy does to his own ſoul by wronging us, than for the prejudice we ſuſtain by him; our compaſſion towards him would diminiſh, if not altogether ſwallow the reſentment of what we ſuffer from him.

But our kindneſs and good will towards our enemies muſt not reſt in empty wiſhes, but expreſs itſelf in kind words and friendly actions. When we ſpeak to our enemy, it muſt be in ſuch ſmooth, diſcreet, and obliging terms, as are moſt like to mollify and gain him; that by *ſoft anſwers* we may *turn away his wrath*, and ſhun all *griveous words, which ſtir up anger*. When we ſpeak of him, it ſhould be as advantageouſly as we can with truth, concealing or qualifying his faults, and praiſing whatever is good in him. And ſure he muſt be ſingularly bad in whom we can find nothing to commend.

Again, We muſt perform for them all thoſe good offices which their neceſſities call for, and our power can reach. *Do good to them that hate you. If our enemy hunger we muſt feed him; if he thriſt, we muſt give him drink: ſo ſhall we heap coals of fire*

upon his head, to mollify his obdurate temper, and overcome his evil by our good; but not to aggravate his guilt and puniſhment, as ſome miſtake the words: for though that be many times the iſſue, yet ought it not to be any part of our deſign.

Laſtly, Becauſe all that we can do for the good of enemies ſignifies little, we muſt employ our intereſt in the court of heaven in their behalf, begging of God that he would turn their hearts to himſelf and to us, and bleſs them with the pardon of all their ſins, particularly the wrongs they have done to ourſelves, and with all things neceſſary for their preſent welfare or future happineſs. *Pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you.* And this is the ſureſt evidence of our charity to them. Mild words may be deſigned as a ſnare to intrap them, and courteſy may be done them to ſerve our vanity, or a generous kind of pride; which may make us delight to have our enemy indebted to us, as knowing that it is more glorious in the eyes of the world to raiſe a fallen adverſary, than to trample on him. But it muſt be only obedience to God's commands, and ſincere love to our enemy which can make us take him into our cloſet, and into our heart: to ſhare

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our prayers with him, and make him partake of the fruits of our devotion; and to have that same concernment for his interests as for our own, at once recommending them both to our heavenly Father.

By this time I hope you understand the importance of this precept of our Saviour, *Love your enemies:* it remains, that we exhort you to the performance. And I shall begin with an argument, which may be of force to give the first assault to our rebellious inclinations, and make way for further and more mild persuasions; and it shall be, the indispensable necessity of the duty. We must not look upon this as a matter which we may do or omit at pleasure; nor yet as a counsel of perfection, highly commendable, but not absolutely necessary to salvation. It is as indispensably required as any other duty of our religion; and he who resolves not to obey in this instance, may renounce his baptism, and abandon christianity. None can escape the obligation of the precept, unless he be so rarely happy as to have no enemies; nor must any think to redeem themselves from this by some other performance. Let our opinions be never so orthodox, and our zeal in maintaining them never so fervent; let our prayers be never

ſo frequent, and all our diſcourſes raviſhing; let our other attainments be never ſo great, and our confidence of our ſalvation never ſo ſtrong: yet, if we refuſe to obey this precept, we are none of Chriſt's diſciples; or, in the words of the Apoſtle, we may ſay *Though I ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels; though I have the gift of prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor; yea although I give my body to be burned, and have not this charity* and love, even to mine enemies, *it profiteth me nothing.* And our Saviour himſelf tells us in expreſs terms that *unleſs we forgive others their treſpaſſes, neither will God forgive us ours.* Yea, he hath taught us to pray for pardon, in ſuch terms as imports a dreadful curſe upon ourſelves, if we are malicious and revengeful, while we beg God would pardon us in the ſame manner that we pardon thoſe who ſin againſt us; ſubſcribing, as it were, with our own hands, and confirming out of our own mouths, that ſentence which ſhall be pronounced againſt us; for even ſo will *God forgive us, i. e.* he will take vengeance on us, if we have dealt ſo with others. And as thoſe who do not love their enemies, do beg their

own

own condemnation in prayer; also *they eat and drink* it in the holy sacrament. And men are commonly so far convinced of this, that many choose to keep back from the table of the Lord, that they may more freely entertain their animosities. But, alas! what a folly and madness this is! Think, they to excuse a sin by the neglect of a duty? Or can they put off death, as they do the participation of the sacrament? Or can they hope to be admitted into the eternal enjoyment of God, if they should die in that malice, which renders them unfit to approach unto him in that holy ordinance? Do not deceive yourselves: never shall any enter into those blessed mansions, those regions of peace and love, whose heart is not first inspired with charity, and softened into a compliance with this very precept. And it were as absurd, to think that a man may be malicious and revengeful all his days, and yet go to heaven, there to learn meekness and charity, as to think that a man may be luxurious and dishonest in this world, and become temperate, and honest, and happy in the other. In a word whatever shifts we may make to deceive ourselves, the command is clear and express, the sanction severe and peremptory; we

have but our choice of theſe two, *love of enemies*, or *damnation*.

Nor can this ſeem unreaſonable to any who conſiders, that God as the author of our natures, the creator of all our faculties may juſtly rule our inclinations, and diſpoſe of our love and affection: and yet he is content (if I may ſo ſpeak) to bargain with us, and to buy off our natural, or rather wicked reſentments; offering us his own mercy and favour, freedom from hell, and everlaſting happineſs, on this, amongſt other conditions, that we *love our enemies*.

Nay, farther, the duty is in itſelf ſo reaſonable, that the more ſober of the Heathens, who had nothing above reaſon to teach them, have acknowledged it, if not as neceſſary, yet as highly becoming, and an eminent inſtance of a virtuous and generous mind. *Plato* could ſay, That *injury is by no means to be done, nor to be repaid to him that has done it.* And when a malicious perſon ſaid to *Zeno*, *Let me periſh if I don't do you a miſchief*; his anſwer was, *Let me periſh if I don't reconcile thee to me*. *Antoninus* tells us frequently, *That all reaſonable creatures are born for one another; and that it is the part of juſtice to bear with others: That it is through*

through ignorance they offend us, not knowing the right way to their own happineſs; and therefore we ſhould rather inſtruct them better, than hate them: That the beſt kind of revenge is, not to be come like them in wickedneſs and malice. And many other excellent arguments does that royal philoſopher bring to the ſame purpoſe. And *Plutarch* gives this as one of the reaſons why God is ſo ſlow in puniſhing wicked perſons, that we may *learn meekneſs and patience by his example*, adding that excellent obſervation, That *our greateſt happineſs and perfection conſiſts in the imitation of our maker.*

But, to leave the teſtimonies of Heathens, the obligation of this precept of loving our enemies may be deduced from another, which every man will acknowledge to be highly reaſonable, the *doing to others what we would have done to ourſelves.* Every one of us deſires to be loved and cheriſhed by others; to have our faults pardoned, our failings overlooked, and our neceſſities ſupplied. Or, if any be ſo haughty and ſtubborn, that they diſdain a courteſy from an enemy; yet I hope there is none ſo mad, but he deſires the favour of God; whoſe hatred he deſerves infinitely more, than his moſt bitter enemy can deſerve his.

How

How then can we think it unreaſonable, to allow that to others, which ourſelves expect and deſire? Can we look that *our maſter ſhould forgive us ten thouſand talents*, if we take *our fellow-ſervant by the throat, and hale him into priſon for one hundred pence?* Or with what confidence can we ſay, *pardon our ſins*, unleſs we be willing to add, that *we pardon thoſe who ſin againſt us?* Certainly, if it be reaſonable to ſeek pardon, it is juſt and equal to give it and nothing but blind ſelfiſhneſs, and extravagant partiality, can teach us to make ſo unreaſonable a difference betwixt ourſelves and others.

Again, The reaſonableneſs of this duty will farther appear if we compare it with that malice and revenge which it does oppoſe. Can there be any thing more againſt natural reaſon, than to delight in an evil which can bring no benefit to us? Yet this is the very nature and eſſence of revenge: for, if the damage we ſuſtain can be repaired, it is no revenge to ſeek it; and, if it cannot, it does no way alleviate the evil of the accident, that we draw him that cauſed it into as great a miſery: nay, unleſs we are unnatural, and without bowels, it will augment our trouble to ſee any evil

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befal him. And he is a miſerable perſon indeed, whoſe delight is in miſchief, whoſe good is the evil of his neighbour. Yea, I may ſay, that he who returns an injury is many times more unreaſonable than he who offered it: for he who firſt wrongs another, hath commonly ſome temptation of advantage by it; which revenge cannot pretend to. But if he has done it out of mere malice, yet he is not worſe than the other who returns it; there being as much phantaſtick pleaſure in ſpite as in revenge: both are alike miſerable and extravagant.

And who are they againſt whom we bend our malice and revenge? Are they not men, partakers of the ſame nature, deſcended from the ſame ſtock with ourſelves, fellow-citizens with us in this world, and with whom we ſhould hope to live for ever in a better? And ſhould we not bear much with thoſe who are ſo nearly related to us? Nay more; they are the workmanſhip of God's hands and, for any thing we know, either are, or may become his children and friends: and dare we pretend any love to God, if we do not ſpare them for *his* ſake? And laſtly, if they have done us any real wrong, they are in ſo far fooliſh, and deſtitute of reaſon: and who would quarrel

with

with a madman; Certainly an injurious perſon knows not what he is doing, for he can never wound his neighbour but through his own ſides, nor prejudice another in a trifling intereſt, without hazarding his own eternal concernment; and therefore he deſerves our pity rather than our hatred.

Much more might be brought to demonſtrate the reaſonableneſs of what our Saviour calls for in the text: but I hope what has been already ſaid may ſuffice to ſtop the mouths of malicious and revengeful men, who are ready to quarrel with it. And if this or any other duty ſeem abſurd or unreaſonable to us, we may learn the cauſe from the apoſtle, *The carnal man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of* God; *for they are fooliſhneſs unto him**. It is the carnality of our heart that makes it ſeem ſo: and therefore, inſtead of diſputing the duty, let us endeavour to purify our ſouls, and open the eyes of our mind; and we ſhall find it to be true, which wiſdom ſaid of her doctrines, *They are all plain to him that underſtandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*

But in the third place, the love of enemies is not only neceſſary and reaſonable, but

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

but alſo amiable and delightful; it has a great deal of pleaſure and ſweetneſs in it. Of this I confeſs. the greateſt evidence muſt be had from the experience and practice of it; the nature even of earthly pleaſures being ſuch, that only the enjoyment can make a man know them. But, though the full knowledge hereof require a nearer acquaintance, yet even thoſe who look at a diſtance, may perceive ſomething of amiableneſs in it, eſpecially comparing it with the trouble and uneaſineſs of that vice it would deliver us from. Malice and revenge are the moſt reſtleſs and tormenting paſſions that can poſſeſs the mind; they keep it in a continual hurry and diſorder; they gnaw a man's heart with anguiſh and vexation, and embitter all his enjoyments; they marr the pleaſures of the day and interupt the repoſe of the night. *Solomon* deſcribes theſe men, *They ſleep not except they have done miſchief; and their ſleep is taken away except they cauſe ſome to fall* *.

On the other hand, the meek and peaceable man, whoſe mind is brought to a compliance with this precept, is above the malice of his enemies. It is not in their power to vex him. Amidſt all the aſſaults of injuries

* Prov. iv. 16.

juries and affronts, he is firm as a rock, which no winds can ſhake, no waves remove. He is happy in the calmneſs and ſerenity of his ſpirit; and is ſure either to convert or ſhame his adverſary by his patience and friendly behaviour. And then the conſciouſneſs of performing his duty, and aſſurance of future reward, afford him infinitely more pure and ſolid pleaſure and delight, than any can expect by indulging and gratifying their vengeful humour.

The advantages of this duty will more clearly appear, when we take a view of thoſe prejudices which commonly are entertained againſt it; which ſhall be our next work.

Firſt, then, ſome cry out upon this precept as injoining impoſſibilities, doing violence to the very conſtitution of nature, and obliging men to a debt that no man is able to pay. They will tell you that it is as eaſy to hate ourſelves, as to love our enemies; to love pain, as to bear an injury meekly: fleſh and blood can't endure it. What arrogance and preſumption is this, thus to impeach the divine laws? It is impoſſible; therefore God ſhould not have commanded it. Such is their reaſoning.

Were

Were it not far more rational to argue thus: It is indiſpenſably commanded, therefore it muſt needs be poſſible? And ſo it has been to all good men that ever lived; and ſo it will be, by God's aſſiſtance, to all that make it their ſtudy. *Fleſh and blood cannot do it.* True enough; but then take this into the account, *Fleſh and blood ſhall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.* It is indeed againſt the propenſion of our corrupt nature; but it is the work of Chriſtians to mortify their corruptions. And if we think it impoſſible, at the command of God, and for the purchaſe of heaven, to love an enemy, and pardon an injury, how would we bear thoſe hard trials which Chriſtians have ſuffered by the cruelty of perſecutors? Whether is it eaſier to ſuffer a wrong, or to *give our body to be burned?* Certainly when we have obeyed this precept, we have not yet *reſiſted unto blood*; and therefore that obedience can never be impoſſible, ſince harder things may be expected from us. Therefore ſeriouſly ſet about the work, and endeavour to bring your minds to a compliance with it; and then your own experience ſhall confute theſe idle pretences, and evince the poſſibility of the performance.

Another prejudice againſt this precept, is, That it ſeems to encourage injuries, by hopes of impunity and reward; giving the delinquent occaſion to expect kindneſs and love, inſtead of the puniſhment which he deſerves and ſo we ſhould draw upon ourſelves a ſecond injury by not requiting the firſt.

But we have already told you, that this precept does not forbid the exerciſe of juſtice by thoſe to whom the ſword is committed, when the publick ſecurity calls for it. As a parent may at once love and correct his child, ſo may a judge be in charity with the perſon he does puniſh. And though it ſhould be granted, that by pardoning injuries, we do expoſe our ſelves to new ones: yet would this amount to no more, but that we may ſuffer hardſhips by our obedience to God; which I hope is not enough to diſpenſe with our duty. But truly the matter goes not commonly thus: for if we conſult either our own obſervation, or the experience of others, we ſhall find, that meek and charitable perſons are moſt ſeldom expoſed to injuries, or engaged in troubles. He muſt needs be a deſperately wicked perſon, who will offer a ſecond injury to one who hath requited the firſt with

with kindneſs and love. Such a ſweet diſpoſition will molify the hardeſt hearts, and charm the moſt froward humours; eſpecially if we carry ourſelves with ſuch prudence and diſcretion, as may teſtify that we are acted by a noble and generous charity, and not by a ſtupid inſenſibility. How often *does a ſoft anſwer turn away wrath?* and the overlooking of an injury prevent farther trouble, throwing water upon the ſpark before it break forth into a flame? Hence, if we look upon meek and quiet perſons, we ſhall ordinarily find them happy in the peace of their families, and favour and kindneſs of all their neighbours; whereas the angry, quarrelſome, and malicious perſon, is an eye-ſore to all about him; his neighbours ſhun him, his ſervants dread him, and all abhor and avoid him. And therefore the obſervation of this precept of our Lord, is ſo far from expoſing us to new injuries, that by the mercy of God it will prove the beſt means to ſecure our tranquillity. Peace ſhall be the reward of a peaceable temper.

But, laſtly, ſome will tell us, that the love of enemies, and pardoning injuries, is inconſiſtent with the *principles of honour*; and will expoſe us to contempt and deri-

ſion. But, alas! to what a ſad paſs are we come, if neither reaſon nor religion may preſcribe the rules of honour; if our notions of it muſt be taken from the language of the ſons of *Belial*, of ſtrife and violence; if to imitate the Deity in his moſt glorious attribute of mercy and forgiveneſs, and become *perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*, be accounted a baſe and diſhonourable thing; and if from this vain imaginary phantaſtick ſhadow of reputation, we will violate all laws, human and divine, and forfeit eternal happineſs! But who are they that will think the worſe of you for your patience? Some vain empty fools, ſome profane atheiſtical wretches, whoſe judgments are not valuable, nor their praiſe worth the having. Or what can they ſay of you, but that you are *meek and lowly*, imitators of that bleſſed maſter whom we profeſs to ſerve? And why do we own the name of Chriſtians, if we be aſhamed of the ſpirit and life of Chriſtianity? Why do we not call ourſelves after the name of *Cain*, *Nimrod*, or ſome other angry and revengeful deſtroyer, if we eſteem thoſe qualities more glorious and excellent? But, if we have any deference for ſo wiſe a man and great a King as *Solomon*, he

he will tell us, that *it is the honour of a man to ceaſe from ſtrife;* and that *he that is ſlow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who ruleth his ſpirit, better than he who taketh a city.*

Thus you ſee how unreaſonable thoſe prejudices are which keep men from the practice of this neceſſary duty. It remains now, that we hint at ſome helps for the performance of it.

The Heathens were pretty ingenious in deviſing motives of patience. They would tell us, that *if we were newly offended, it was too ſoon to reſent it; if long time ſince, it was too late. If the offender be too ſtrong for us, it were folly to contend; if he were too weak, it were a ſhame. Are we offended by a friend, let us remember our old friendſhip; if by an enemy, let us do him a kindneſs, and he will do ſo no more.* But Chriſtianity will direct us to better means for compoſing the ſoul into the meekneſs, and charity which it does require.

The firſt I ſhall recommend, is *humility.* Let us learn to have low thoughts of ourſelves; and then we ſhall have both fewer enemies, and be more inclined to love them. Pride and ſelf-conceit makes us over-rate every petty injury, and inclines us to re-

venge; but if we conſider what poor contemptible things we are in ourſelves, and what we have deſerved, if not from men, yet from God, whoſe inſtruments they are for our correction, we ſhall be little concerned at what the world calls affronts, and eaſily reconciled to thoſe who have wronged us.

Secondly, Let us learn to have a low eſteem of the preſent world, and all things therein; and this will cut off the occaſions of our hatred and animoſities. Men may wrong us in our fortune or reputation; but they cannot rob us of piety and virtue, of the favour of God, and eternal happineſs. And therefore, if our minds be once raiſed above thoſe tranſitory vanities, we cannot meet with injuries worth the reſenting. If we aim at heaven, and the glory of another world, we ſhall not ſtand to quarrel and contend about any trifling intereſt in our way thither.

Thirdly, The frequent and ſerious thoughts of death, would conduce much to allay our hatred, and diſpoſe us to meekneſs and charity. Naturaliſts tell us, that when ſwarms of bees fight in the air, they are diſperſed, by throwing duſt among them. Did we in our thoughts often reflect upon that

that duſt whereunto we muſt all ſhortly return, we ſhould more eaſily lay down our quarrels and animoſities. While we contend about ſmall things little do we conſider that death is coming on apace, and will ſwallow up the victor and the vanquiſhed; him that is in the right, and him that is in the wrong. Look back upon the private contentions, or publick commotions, which infeſted the world an hundred years ago; where are they who managed them? They are all gone down into the dark and ſilent grave. Death hath decided their controverſies, and within a few days it will do ſo with ours, and ſend us all to plead our cauſe before our great judge; and it will go ill with us, if we appear there in malice. Therefore, why ſhould our hatred be long. ſince our life is ſo ſhort? One would think we ſhould find better employment for the ſhort time we have to ſpend here.

But, laſtly, and above all, let us propoſe to ourſelves the bleſſed example of the holy *Jeſus, who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſufferea he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

Let us frequently remember what great things he hath done and ſuffered for us

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poor ſinful wretches; even while *we were enemies and rebels to him;* how that in all the paſſages of his life, and all the bloody ſcene of his ſufferings, he was acted by that ſame *charity and love to his enemies* which he calls for at our hands. It was this which moved him to deſcend from heaven, and clothe himſelf with the frailties of our nature, and endure the troubles of a calamitous life, and the pains of a bitter death, to deliver us from that eternal miſery whereinto we had plunged ourſelves. And may not his goodneſs and mercy to us, mollify our hearts, and overpower the corruption of our revengeful nature, and inſpire us with earneſt deſires and reſolutions to imitate his bleſſed example? After all that he hath done and ſuffered for us, can we be guilty of ſuch a ſhameful ingratitude, as to deny him this poor ſatisfaction and acknowledgment, to pardon an enemy for his ſake? Has *he died for us* when we were *his enemies*, and ſhall we refuſe to live at peace with ours? Remember with what patience he endured *the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf*; with what humility he did condeſcend to waſh the feet of that wicked miſcreant, who was at the ſame time reſolved to betray him; with what mildneſs

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did he bear the ſupine negligence and ſtupidity of his diſciples, who ſlept in the time of his agony. What charity and meekneſs did he evidence toward thoſe who ſought his life! He could have called for legions of angels to deſtroy them, or made the earth to open her mouth and ſwallow them up: but he would not employ his miraculous power, ſave only for their good, reſtoring a ſervant's ear, and reproving the prepoſterous zeal of him who cut it off. Yea, while he hung upon the croſs and was approaching to the gates of death, all the cruel pains of body and far more intolerable preſſure of ſpirit which he than ſuſtained, did not leſſen his wonderful tenderneſs and affection for his bloody murderers: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Let us be frequent and ſerious in the meditation of theſe things. And if we have any veneration for the example of our Saviour, and any ſenſe of his infinite mercy, this will diſpoſe us to the practice of his precepts, and the obedience of his laws; and particularly the obſervation of this neceſſary, this reaſonable, and delightful duty, that we *love our enemies.*

THE

THE NECESSITY and ADVANTAGE of early AFFLICTIONS.

LAM. iii. 27. 28.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence, becauſe he hath born it upon him.

THE great difference and contrariety betwixt the maxims of the world, and thoſe which religion doth propoſe, is in nothing more obſervable than in taking the meaſures of happineſs and felicity. The world accounteth him a happy man who enjoyeth a perpetual calm and ſunſhine of proſperity; whoſe pleaſant and joyful days are never overcaſt with any cloud, nor his tranquillity interrupted by any diſaſtrous accident; and who was never acquainted with any other change, but that which brought him the new and freſh reliſh of ſucceding pleaſures and enjoyments. But religion hath taught us to look upon this as a condition full of danger; much more to be pitied than envied, to be feared than to be deſired. It hath taught us to conſider afflictions as inſtances of the divine goodneſs, as tokens and pledges of his

his love: (for *whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he recieveth*); and that theſe ſevere diſpenſations are very neceſſary, and may prove uſeful and advantageous: *Bleſſed is the man* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord* *, &c. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I may learn thy ſtatutes* †. And the Prophet in the text, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* He was at this time loaded with the heavieſt weight of trouble and ſorrow, what for the publick calamities of his nation, and what for his own particular ſufferings: *His eyes were running down with rivers of water, for the deſtructions of the daughter of his people;* they trickled down and ceaſed not. *Judah* was gone into captivity becauſe of affliction: ſhe dwelt among the Heathen, and found no reſt; all her perſecutors overtook her in the ſtraits. The ways of *Zion* did mourn, becauſe none came to the ſolemn feaſts; the young and the old were lying on the ground in the ſtreets, the virgins and young men were fallen by the ſword, and the few that remained, were ſtarving for hunger. The people did ſigh, and ſeek bread; they gave their pleaſant things

* Pſal. xciv. 12. † Pſal. cxix. 71.

things for meat to relieve their ſoul; the children and ſucklings did ſwoon in the ſtreets, their ſoul was poured out into their mother's boſom; the women did eat their fruit, their children of a ſpan long. And the Prophet had a large ſhare in theſe calamities, both by his own intereſt, and his compaſſion towards his neighbour: *I am the man* (ſaith he) *that hath ſeen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Surely againſt me is he turned: he turneth his hand againſt me all the day.*

But after he had thus bemoaned himſelf, and given ſome vent to his paſſion and ſorrow, he puts a ſtop to the current that was grown too impetuous, and turns his thoughts another way. He acknowledgeth the juſtice of God's diſpenſations; and that it was a favour they ſuffered no more: *This I recal into my mind, therefore have I hope. It is the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not. They are new every morning.* Nay, when he had further pondered the matter, he finds himſelf indebted to the goodneſs of God, even for the afflictions he endured *It is good for a man*, &c.

The bearing of the yoke is an eaſy and obvious metaphor, importing the reſtraint

of

of liberty, when our desires are denied, and we have not our wills, cannot ramble up and down as we please; and also the pressure of afflictions which gaul and torment us, under which we smart and groan. Such is the yoke which the Prophet tells us it is *good for a man that he bear*. A strange doctrine indeed to flesh and blood! and O how few do believe it! We judge of things by their outward appearance, and as they affect us at present, (*Now no affliction or chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous**); and we cannot persuade ourselves that there is any good in that which we feel to be troublesome and unpleasant. But, if we consult our reason and our faith, they will soon bring us to the acknowledgment of this truth, That *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* The crosses we meet with, are not the effects of blind chance; but the results of a wise and unerring providence, which knoweth what is fittest for us and loveth us better than we can do ourselves. There is no malice or envy lodged in the bosom of that blessed being, whose name and nature is *love*. He taketh no delight in the

* Heb xii. 11

trouble and miſeries of his creatures: *He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.* It were infinetly unworthy of his wiſdom and goodneſs, to pleaſe himſelf in ſeeing ſuch poor creatures as we are, toſſed up and down in the world, to behold our anguiſh, and hear our groans. It is our happineſs and welfare which he deſigns in all his diſpenſations; and he maketh choice of the moſt proper and effectual means for that end. He ſeeth us wandering out of the way, ready to ruin and undo ourſelves; and he firſt eſſayeth to reduce us by milder and more gentle methods: he trieth our gratitude and ingenuity by all the endearments of mercy and goodneſs; he draweth us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. But if we break all theſe bands aſunder, and caſt away theſe cords from us; if we abuſe his goodneſs, and turn his grace into wantonneſs; then, not only his juſtice, but his love to us, not only his hatred to ſin, but his affection unto us, will oblige him to alter his method, and take the rod in his hand, and try what ſeverity can do. God's deſign in afflicting us, is excellently expreſſed by the author to the *Hebrews*, chap. xii. ver. 10. *He chaſteneth us for our profit,*

profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs. Holineſs is the higheſt perfection and greateſt happineſs we are capable of: it is a real participation of the divine nature, the image of God drawn on the ſoul: and all the chaſtiſments we meet with, are deſigned to reduce us to this bleſſed temper, to make us like unto himſelf; and thereby capable to be happy with him to all eternity. This will more clearly appear, if we reflect on the natural temper of our minds, and the influence which proſperous or adverſe fortune is wont to have upon them.

And, firſt, we are naturally proud and ſelf-conceited; we have an high eſteem of ourſelves, and would have every body elſe to value and eſteem us. This diſeaſe is very deeply rooted in our corrupt nature: it is ordinarily the firſt ſin that bewrays itſelf in the little actions and paſſions of children; and many times the laſt which religion enables us to overcome. And ſuch is the malignity of its nature, that it renders us odious and vile both in the ſight of God and man. It cannot but be infinitely diſpleaſing to that great and glorious Majeſty, to ſee ſuch ſilly creatures whom he hath brought forth out of nothing, and

who are every moment ready to return into it again, and have nothing of their own but folly, and miſery, and ſin; to ſee ſuch creatures, I ſay, either, ſo blind as to value themſelves, or ſo unreaſonable as to deſire others to value them. Good men muſt needs hate us for it, becauſe God doth ſo; and evil men hate us for it, becauſe they are proud themſelves, and ſo are jealous of the attempts of others to exalt themſelves, as of that which tendeth to depreſs and diminiſh them. Pride alone is the ſource and fountain of almoſt all the diſorders in the world; of all our troubles, and of all our ſins: and we ſhall never be truly happy, or truly good, till we come to think nothing of ourſelves, and be content that all the world think nothing of us. Now, there is nothing hath a more natural tendency to foment and heighten this natural corruption, than conſtant proſperity and ſucceſs. The Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of the proſperity of the wicked who are not in troubles as others, neither are they plauged like other men, preſently ſubjoineth the effect, *Therefore pride compaſſeth them about as a chain* *. Sanctified afflictions contribute to abate and mortify the pride of our hearts,

* Pſal. lxxiii. 6.

hearts, to prick the ſwelling impoſthume, to make us ſenſible of our weakneſs, and convince us of our ſins. Thus *doth God open the ears of men, and ſeal their inſtruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpoſe, and hide pride from man* *. *And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he ſheweth them their work, and their tranſgreſſions that they have exceeded* †. Afflictions do both put us on the ſearch to find out the offences wherewith we have provoked God, and make us more ſenſible of the heinouſneſs and malignity of their nature: *I have ſurely heard Ephraim bemoaning himſelf thus, Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed, as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was chaſtiſed, I repented; and after I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh: I was aſhamed, yea, even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth* ‡.

Another diſtemper of our minds, is our too great affection to the world and worldly things. We are all too apt to ſet our hearts wholly upon them; to take up our

* Job xxxiii. 16, 17.
† Job xxxvi. 8, 9.
‡ Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

reſt, and ſeek our happineſs and ſatisfaction in them. But God knows, that theſe may well divert and amuſe a while, they can never ſatisfy or make us happy; that the ſouls which he made for himſelf, can never reſt, till they return unto him: and therefore he many times findeth it neceſſary, either to remove our comforts, or imbitter them unto us; to put *aloes* and *wormwood* on the breaſts of the world, that thereby we may wean our hearts from it, and carry them to the end of their being, the fountain of their bleſſedneſs and felicity. The few and little comforts of this life, (ſaith a perſon of great quality and worth), notwithſtanding all the troubles and croſſes with which they are interlarded, are apt to keep the hearts even of good men in too great love of this world. What would become of us, if our whole life ſhould be altogether proſperous and contenting, without any intermixture of croſſes and afflictions? It is too probable we ſhould never look any further; but conclude, with *Peter* on the mount of transfiguration, *Lord, it is good to be here.* As Almighty God hath a very great affection to us, ſo he is very deſirous of our love; not that it bringeth any advantage

to

to him, but becauſe it is our greateſt happineſs and perfection. He beſtoweth his mercies to gain our hearts; but, when we begin to doat on the gifts, and forget the giver, he becomes jealous, and takes them away, that he may not have any rival in our affection. And certainly it is no ſmall advantage to have our hearts in any meaſure looſened from the world, diſintangled from every thing here below. *Quocunque pretio bene emitur:* He makes a good purchaſe who obtains it, let it coſt him never ſo dear.

Another bad effect which proſperity is wont to produce in our corrupt natures, is, that it makes us forgetful of God, and unthankful of his mercies. When ſecond cauſes anſwer our expectations and deſires, we are ſeldom wont to look beyond them: we never regard the fountain, till the ciſterns begin to fail. This it was that made *Agur* to pray againſt a plentiful fortune, *leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay Who is the Lord?* When the weather is fair, and the ſails are filled with a proſperous gale, the rough and ſtubborn mariners are ſeldom at their devotion: but when the ſtorm is riſen, and the ſea begins to ſwell, and every wave threateneth to devour them; *then*

then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, as on him who can alone *deliver them out of their diſtreſs*. The Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of their ſtiff-necked and rebellious predeceſſors, tells us, that *when God ſlew them, then they ſought him: and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer* * *In their affliction* (ſaith the Lord by the prophet) *they will ſeek me early* †. I doubt not a great many devout perſons will acknowledge, that it was ſome affliction or other that firſt taught them to pray. And as afflictions contribute to make us remember our dependence on God, and then excite us to ſeek unto him; ſo alſo they render us more ſenſible of our obligations unto him, and more thankful for the mercies he hath beſtowed on us. We are ſo dull and inſenſible, that we ſeldom value any of the divine mercies, till we find what it is to want them. We put very little value on our food and raiment, and the ordinary means of our ſubſiſtance, unleſs we have been ſometimes pinched with want. We conſider not how much we are indebted to God for preſerving our friends, till ſome of them be removed from us. How little

* Pſal. lxxviii. 34, 35. † Hoſ. v. 15.

little do we prize our health, if we have never had experience of ſickneſs or pain! Where is the man who doth ſeriouſly bleſs God for his nightly quiet and repoſe? And yet, if ſickneſs or trouble deprive us of it, we then find it to have been a great and invaluable mercy, and that *it is God who giveth his beloved ſleep.*

Once more, Proſperity rendereth us inſenſible of the miſeries and calamities of others. Thoſe *who were at eaſe in Zion, did not grieve for the afflictions of Joſeph.* But afflictons do ſoften the heart, and make it more tender and kindly; and we are always moſt ready to compaſſionate thoſe griefs which ourſelves have ſometime endured: the ſufferings of others make the deepeſt impreſſions upon us, when they put us in mind of our own. It is mentioned as a powerful motive to engage the children of *Iſrael* to be kind and merciful to ſtrangers, that *they knew very well the heart of a ſtranger, having been ſtrangers themſelves in Egypt.* Now, this tender and compaſſionate temper doth well become a Chriſtian, whoſe duty it is to *weep with thoſe that weep* and to have as deep a ſenſe and feeling of the griefs of others, as he is wont to have of his own.

Theſe

Theſe and many more advantages do ſanctified and well-improved afflictions bring to a Chriſtian; on the account of which *it is good for him that he hath borne the yoke.* But I haſten to that which is mentioned in the text. Only by the way (that I may not need to return) let me take notice of the ſeaſon which is here mentioned as the fitteſt for a man to bear affliction: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

We are all willing to put off the evil day; and, if we muſt needs bear the yoke, we would chuſe to have it delayed till we grow old. We think it ſad to have our morning overcaſt with clouds, to meet with a ſtorm before we have well launched forth from the ſhore. We are wont to indulge and applaud children and young folks in their frolicks and jovial humours; and tell them, they will have time enough for cares and troubles when they grow older: we turn that irony of *Solomon*'s into a ſerious advice, *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the ſight of thine eyes.* But the divine wiſdom, which knoweth what is fit for us, doth many times make choice of our younger years, as the moſt proper to accuſtom us to the

the bearing of the yoke. And a little conſideration will make us diſcover the advantages of this ſeaſon for ſuffering afflictions; they being at that time moſt neceſſary, moſt tolerable, and moſt advantageous. Firſt, I ſay, they are then moſt neceſſary. For youth is the time of our life wherein we are in greateſt danger to run into wild and extravagant courſes: our blood is hot, and our ſpirits unſtayed and giddy; we have too much pride to be governed by others, and too little wiſdom to govern ourſelves. The yoke is then eſpecially needful to tame our wildneſs, and reduce us to a due ſtayedneſs and compoſure of mind. Then alſo it is moſt ſupportable. The body is ſtrong and healthful, and leſs apt to be affected with the troubles of the mind; the ſpirit ſtout and vigorous, will not ſo eaſily break and ſink under them. Old age is a burden, and will ſoon faint under any ſupervenient load. The ſmalleſt trouble is enough *to bring down grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave.* And therefore, ſince we muſt meet with afflictions, it is certainly a favourable circumſtance, to have them at the time of our life wherein we are moſt able to endure them. And, laſtly, the leſſons which afflictions teach us, are then moſt

moſt adventageous when we learn them betimes, that we may have the uſe of them in the conduct of our after lives. An early engagement into the ways of religion is a great felicity; and the means whereby this is to be effected, can never be too ſoon adminiſtered. Youth is more ſoft and pliable; and evil diſpoſitions are more eaſily cured, before time and cuſtom have hardened us in them. A tree needs little force to bend it when it is young; and there needeth the leſs of the rod, if the child be brought under diſcipline betimes. And thus on many accounts *it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.*

We proceed to the particular advantage of afflictions which is mentioned in the text: *He ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence, becauſe he hath borne it upon him.* The words are capable of a twofold interpretation, and both ſuit well with the pupoſe: for we may either underſtand them properly of *ſolitude and ſilence;* or metaphorically, of *patience and quiet ſubmiſſion;* both of which are the good effects of ſanctified and well improved afflictions: and accordingly we ſhall ſay ſomething to both. Nature hath made us ſociable creatures: but corruption hath carried this inclination

clination unto excesſ; ſo that moſt perſons think it an intolerable burden to be any conſiderable time alone. Though they love themſelves out of meaſure, yet they cannot endure their own converſation; they had rather be hearing and diſcourſing of the moſt naughty and trivial things, than be ſitting alone and holding their peace. Outward proſperity heightens this humour. When the heart is dilated with joy, it ſeeketh to vent itſelf in every company. When a man is free of trouble and cares, he thinks of nothing but how to pleaſe himſelf with variety of diverſions and converſations. Croſſes, on the other hand, render a man penſive and ſolitary; they ſtop the mouth, and bind up the tongue, and incline the perſon to be much alone. Sadneſs makes his company diſagreeable to others, and he findeth theirs as little agreeable to him: *He ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence becauſe he hath borne it upon him.* Thus the ſame prophet ſaid *I ſat not in the aſſembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced: I ſat alone becauſe of thine hand* *.

Now, he who conſiders, on the one hand, the guilt we are wont to contract, and the prejudice which we ſuſtain, by too much converſation

* Jer. xv. 17

converſation with others, and on the other hand, the excellent improvement we may make of ſolitude and retirement, will account it a good effect of afflictions, that they incline and diſpoſe us unto it. In conſidering the evils of frequent converſation, we are not to proſecute the groſſer and more ſcandalous vices of the tongue. It might ſeem a poor commendation of *ſolitude* and *ſilence*, that a man is not ſwearing or lying, or ſcolding, or talking profanely when he is alone: a man may converſe enough, and keep himſelf free from theſe. We rather chuſe to mention ſuch evils as are wont to be leſs noticed, and can be more hardly avoided.

And, firſt, experience may teach us all, that much converſation doth ordinarily beget a remiſſneſs and diſſolution of ſpirit; that it ſlacketh and relaxeth the bent of our minds, and diſpoſeth us to ſoftneſs and eaſy compliances. We find it hard enough at any time to compoſe our ſpirits to that ſtayedneſs and ſeverity which religion doth require: but if we be too much in company with others, it is almoſt impoſſible to mantain it. That chearfulneſs and complaiſance which is judged neceſſary to render converſation agreeable, doth eaſily degenerate

generate into levity and ſin: and we are very ready to diſpleaſe our maker, when we are too intent on pleaſing our friends. This looſe frame and diſſipation of mind which ſociety doth occaſion, made a good man complain, *Ex hominum conſortio ſemper venio minus homo:* that he always came out of company leſs a man.

Another prejudice we receive by ſociety, is, That it fills our minds with noxious images, and fortifies our corrupt notions and opinions of things. Our hearts are naturally too much addicted to the things of the world; we mind them too much, and put too high a value upon them: and the diſcourſes we hear redouble the temptation, by bringing them continually into our thoughts; and ſetting them off to the greateſt advantage. When we are alone in a ſober temper, and take time to reflect and conſider of things, we are ſometimes perſuaded of the vanity and worthleſſneſs of all thoſe glittering trifles whereunto the generality of mankind are ſo ſadly bewitched: but when we come abroad, and liſten to the common talk, and hear people ſpeak of greatneſs, and riches, and honour, with concern and admiration, we quickly forget our more ſober and deliberate thoughts, and ſuffer ourſelves to be

carried away with the ſtream of the common opinion. And though the effects be not ſo ſudden and obſervable, yet theſe diſcourſes are ſtill making ſome ſecret and inſenſible impreſſions upon us.

Thus alſo is our judgment corrupted about the qualities and endowments of the mind. Courage and gallantry, wit and eloquence and other accompliſhments of this nature, are magnified and extolled beyond all meaſure; whereas humility, and meekneſs, and devotion, and all thoſe Chriſtian graces which render a ſoul truly excellent and lovely, are ſpoken of as mean and contemptible things: for though men have not the impudence formally to make the compariſon, and prefer the former; yet their very air, and way of diſcourſing about theſe things, ſufficiently teſtifies their opinion. With what affection and concernment will they repreſent a gallant or learned man; but how faintly do they utter the character of a good man! And ſo, in cenſuring mens failings, they exaggerate the ſmalleſt inſtances of weakneſs or imprudence, but ſpeak lightly enough of the greateſt crimes. Drunkeneſs and whoredom are mentioned in ſuch terms as expreſs little ſenſe of their henious nature, and tend to leſſen the horror

ror we ſhould have of them. Ambition and revenge, and ſuch other plauſable vices, are rather allowed than condemned. And while we converſe in the world, and are accuſtomed to ſuch repreſentations of things, our judgments are thereby exceedingly corrupted, and we entertain falſe and pernicious maxims. And ſo hard it is to guard ourſelves againſt the contagion, that we had better ſit alone and keep ſilence, than be continually expoſed to the temptation.

I ſhall mention but another of thoſe evils wherewith our converſation is commonly attended. The moſt ordinary ſubject of our entertainments are the faults and follies of others. *Itur in verba, ſermo ſeritur, vita aliena deſcribitur.* We meet and talk, and fall to deſcribe the life and deportment of others. Were this one theme of diſcourſe diſcharged, we would often-times find but little to ſay. I ſcarce know any fault whereof good perſons are ſo frequently guilty, and ſo little ſenſible. They know perhaps the things are true, and they have no malcious deſign in reporting them; they tell them only as they do the publick news, to divert themſelves, and gratify their friends. But, would we conſult our own hearts, and apply the great

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rule of righteouſneſs, of doing unto others as we would be done unto ourſelves, we ſhould ſoon be convinced of a great deal more guilt and ſinfulneſs in ſuch diſcourſe than we are wont to apprehend. How ill do we take it to have our failings thus expoſed, and to hear that any perſon hath made as bold with us as we are wont to make with others? Again how loth would we be, that the perſons of whom we ſpeak ſo freely, ſhould overhear our diſcourſe, or be informed of it? Now, if the practice had nothing blameable in it, why ſhould we be ſo ſhy to avow it?

I have only hinted at theſe things: but he who ſhall ſeriouſly ponder them, will acknowledge, there is no little prejudice even in thoſe entertainments which paſs for very innocent in the world; and that he ſhunneth much guilt and many ſnares who *ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence.* But ſolitude and retirement do not only deliver us from theſe inconveniencies, but alſo afford very excellent opportunities for bettering our ſouls. Thoſe hours we miſpend in needleſs viſits and idle talk, if rightly improved, might ſet us a great way forward on our journey to heaven. While we are too buſy in making or entertaining ac-

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quaintance with men, we many times fall out of acquaintance both with God and ourſelves.

The moſt profane and irreligious perſons will find ſome ſerious thoughts riſe in their minds if they be much alone. And the more that any perſon is advanced in piety and goodneſs, the more will he delight in retirement, and receive the more benefit by it. Then it is that the devout ſoul takes its higheſt flight in divine contemplations and maketh its neareſt approaches to God. I find the *vulgar Latin* rendereth the words of the text, *Sedebit ſolitarius & tacebit, quia levavit ſe ſupra ſe: The ſolitary perſon will ſit ſtill and hold his peace, becauſe he hath lifted up himſelf above himſelf;* raiſed his ſpirit above his ordinary pitch. *In ſolitudine* (ſaith one of the fathers) *aer purior, cœlum apertius, familiarior Deus: In ſolitude we breath, as it were, in a purer air, heaven is more open unto us, and God is more familiar and frequent in his viſits.* To which purpoſe ſome have applied that of the Prophet *Hoſea, Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderneſs, and there ſpeak comfortably unto her*; or, as the original importeth, *I will ſpeak unto her heart.* That rule which

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our Saviour giveth for our devotion, *to enter into our cloſet, and ſhut the door behind us*, is as neceſſary to preſerve us from diſtraction, as from vanity and oſtentation. When we have retired as much as we can from the world, we do ſtill carry too much of it along with us, The images of things do ſufficiently perſecute and diſturb us, though we be not expoſed to the objects themſelves. Our bleſſed Saviour thought not the mountains and deſarts retired enough for his devotions; but would add the darkneſs and ſilence of the night. Little doth the world underſtand thoſe ſecret and hidden pleaſures which devout ſouls do feel, when, having got out of the noiſe and hurry of the world, they ſit alone and keep ſilence, contemplating the divine perfections, which ſhine ſo conſpicuouſly in all his works of wonder; admiring his greatneſs, and wiſdom, and love, and revolving his favours towards themſelves; opening before him their griefs and their cares, and diſburdening their ſouls into his boſom; proteſting their allegiance and ſubjection unto him, and telling him a thouſand times that they love him; and then liſtening unto the voice, of God within their hearts, that ſtill and quiet voice, which

which is not wont to be heard in the ſtreets, that they may hear what God the Lord will ſpeak: for he will ſpeak peace unto his people, and to his ſaints, and viſit them with the expreſſions of his love. No wonder if thoſe bleſſed ſouls who have taſted the pleaſures of holy retirement, and found themſelves, as it were, in the ſuburbs of heaven, grow weary of company and affairs, and long for the returning of thoſe happy hours, as the hireling for the ſhades of the evening: no wonder they pity the fooliſh buſy world, who ſpend their days in vanity, and know not what it is indeed to live.

But here I would not be miſtaken, as if I recommended a total and conſtant retirement, or perſuaded men to forſake the world, and betake themſelves unto deſarts. No certainly; we muſt not abandon the ſtations wherein God hath placed us, nor render ourſelves uſeleſs to mankind. Solitude hath its temptations, and we may be ſometimes very bad company to ourſelves. It was not without reaſon that a wiſe perſon warned another, who profeſſed to delight in converſing with himſelf, *Vide ut cum homine probo:* Have a care that you be keeping company with a good man. A-

buſed

buſed ſolitude may whet mens paſions, and irritate their luſts, and prompt them to things which company would reſtrain. And this made one ſay, that *he who is much alone, muſt either be a ſaint or devil.* Melancholy, which inclines men moſt to retirement, is often too much nouriſhed and fomented by it; and there is a peeviſh and ſullen lonelineſs, which ſome people affect under their troubles, whereby they feed on diſcontented thoughts, and find a kind of perverſe pleaſure in refuſing to be comforted. But all this ſays no more, but that good things may be abuſed; and exceſs or diſorder may turn the moſt wholſome food into poiſon. And therefore, though I would not indifferently recommend much ſolitude unto all; yet, ſure, I may ſay, it were good for the moſt part of men that they were leſs in company, and more alone.

Thus much of the firſt and proper ſenſe of *ſitting alone and keeping ſilence.* We told you it might alſo import a quiet and patient ſubmiſſion to the will of God; the laying of our hand on our mouth, that no expreſſion of murmur or diſcontent may eſcape us. *I was dumb*, ſaid the Pſalmiſt, *I opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it**. And

* Pſal. xxxix. 9.

And the Prophet deſcribeth our Saviour's patience, that *he was oppreſſed, and was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter and as a ſheep before the ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth**. Indeed a modeſt and unaffected ſilence is a good way to expreſs our ſubmiſſion to the hand of God under afflictions. The Heathen moraliſts, who pretend much to patience, could never hold their peace; but deſired always to ſignalize themſelves by ſome fetches of wit, and expreſſions of unuaſual courage. But certainly the mute and quiet Chriſtian behaves himſelf much better. *Loquaciſſimum illud ſilentium:* That eloquent and expreſſive ſilence ſaith more than all their vain and Stoical boaſtings. We cannot now inſiſt in any length on this Chriſtian duty of patience, and ſubmiſſion to the will of God; we ſhall only ſay two things of it, which the text importeth. Firſt, That this leſſon is moſt commonly learned in the ſchool of afflictions: *He ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence, becauſe he hath borne it upon him.* In that forecited place of *Jeremiah* xxxi. 18. *Ephraim bemoaning himſelf, acknowledgeth that he had been as a bullock unaccuſtomed*

* Iſ. liii. 7.

unaccuſtomed to the yoke; which maketh the greater reluctancy againſt it. Children that are much indulged are the more impatient if they come to be croſſed; and there is too much of the child in us all. The Apoſtle tells us, that *tribulation worketh patience* *. Cuſtom makes every thing more tolerable unto us; and if it pleaſe God to ſanctify the firſt ſtroke, the ſecond is received with the greater ſubmiſſion. The other thing I have to ſay on this duty, is, That this advantage of affliction is very great and deſirable; that it is indeed *very good for a man to have borne the yoke in his youth*, if he hath thereby learned *to keep ſilence when the hand of the Lord is upon him.* There is nothing more acceptable unto God, no object more lovely and amiable in his eyes, than a ſoul thus proſtrate before him, thus entirely reſigned unto his holy will, thus quietly ſubmitting to his ſevereſt diſpenſations. Nor is it leſs advantageous unto ourſelves; but ſweeteneth the bittereſt occurences of our life, and makes us reliſh an inward and ſecret pleaſure, notwithſtanding all the ſmart of affliction: ſo that the yoke becomes ſupportable, the rod itſelf comforts us; and we

* Rom. v. 3

we find much more delight in ſuffering the will of God, than if he had granted us our own. Now to this God who loveth us, and correcteth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs, and thereby of his happineſs; to God the Father, Son, and bleſſed Spirit, be all honour, praiſe, and glory, now and for ever, *Amen.*

END *of the firſt* VOLUME.

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